



CAYMAN ISLANDS
GOVERNMENT

**Hon. Premier's Statement for the UN General Assembly for the High-Level Review Meeting on Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States
24-25 SEPTEMBER 2010**

Mr. Secretary General, the Honourable Chairman, Prime Minister of St Vincent & the Grenadines, Permanent Representatives, Excellencies, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen; greetings.

The Cayman Islands Government is committed to sustainable development, and we support the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy objectives for the Caribbean. However, we must take account of two additional factors. First, much of the Caribbean is still recovering from recession. Second, the Associate Member Countries of the UN – which includes the Cayman Islands – have not been eligible and have not benefitted from most of the regional assistance programmes. In fact, this is the first time that the Cayman Islands have participated directly in a meeting of the General Assembly.

It is clear, however, that the Mauritius Strategy for the Caribbean cannot be fully implemented if some islands are excluded on political or constitutional grounds. We are just as vulnerable to hurricanes, earthquakes and sea level rise as our neighbours.

We therefore urge the General Assembly to understand the position of the Associate Members, and the Overseas Countries and Territories, to allow them to participate fully in all programmes for the region, and at the UN here in New York. We would like to remind this meeting of the ECLAC Reports of 2004 and 2007, both of which argued strongly for OT involvement in UN programmes.

We do not come to you as supplicants, but as committed partners that intend to play an active role in sharing our skills and experience, so that every jurisdiction in the Caribbean will be able to implement the Mauritius Strategy. We would like to see a stronger focus on areas of critical importance to small islands, including sustainable economic development, resilience, disaster aid, fiscal saving and risk management.

The obvious forum for increased Caribbean cooperation is the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee, which could become the UN voice of the Associate Member Countries. I will speak to my counterparts in the regional UKOTs and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office so that we can take a joint decision on this issue. I will do so at our Consultative Council in London later this year.

The Cayman Islands Government also works with the seventeen members of the Association of Overseas Countries and Territories, who are in partnership with the European Union. At the OCT-EU Forum last December we agreed that every member of both OCTA and the EU had to improve their competitiveness, and that this required good infrastructure, a first-class educational system, and strategies to utilize natural assets while simultaneously ensuring strong environmental protection.

These areas are now central to the OCT-EU relationship. One of the first developments is a major EU-funded project to enhance innovation in small businesses in the OCTs.

We believe that the relationship between the OCTs and the EU could serve as a model for OCT involvement in UN programmes. This is a relationship based on clear identification of mutual interests, common goals and strategic priorities.

It is important to address the issues of vulnerability and resilience in small islands such as ours. However, we need to move away from relationships based on post-colonial guilt, and trade preferences that had the unintended effect of discouraging diversification and prolonging dependency. We need a new and equal relationship between our nations, based on mutual self-interest and shared benefits.

We all need to build competitive economies. All of us therefore need to build strategic planning into the heart of our systems of government. The Cayman Islands Government's National Planning Initiative is a step towards a truly integrated approach to planning, with social, economic and environmental objectives all fully incorporated. We want to become an exemplar of what the UN Environment Programme has defined as Integrated Policy Development.

For example, as we modernize our key infrastructure, we will also ensure that it is gradually relocated to less vulnerable sites and can survive the impacts of climate change. All new houses must now be built to stronger building codes, and the wind-speed specification will be raised from 130 to 150mph. We will encourage residents to install hurricane shutters or impact-resistant windows. We will ask the private sector to ensure that all buildings will protect their occupants, and that insurance premiums are adjusted accordingly.

We must reduce carbon emissions if humanity is to have a future, so all countries must take decisive steps to reduce their dependency on fossil fuels. In the Cayman Islands we have eliminated import tariffs on energy efficiency and renewable energy products. We are also working with the private sector to increase the use of LPG, and investigating bio-fuels and waste-to-energy proposals.

The Cayman Islands have already achieved a relatively high level of economic diversification with the development of a strong financial services sector. Information and communication technologies now allow many online services to be delivered on a highly competitive basis from small

islands such as ours. We also place great importance on growing our small business sector and encouraging entrepreneurship, and we are committed to increasing efficiency and driving down the cost of government.

This approach has given the Cayman Islands strong, sustained economic growth and one of the highest standards of living in the world. We therefore recommend that the next stage in the Mauritius Strategy should focus on ways that other islands can also become more competitive. We believe that this is the best way to achieve the goals of the Mauritius Strategy.

I would like to add my thanks to Ambassador Sir Mark Lyall Grant for facilitating the Cayman's attendance in these high-level review meetings and to all the participants for their excellent contributions to the proceedings. I look forward to further positive developments through the UN General Assembly and UN ECLAC.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank you.