



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC TO THE
UNITED NATIONS**

**STATEMENT BY H. E. DANILO MEDINA SÁNCHEZ
PRESIDENT OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
AT THE PLENARY OF THE 73rd GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

New York, September 25, 2018

Check against delivery

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY, PRESIDENT OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, DANILO
MEDINA,
AT THE SEVENTY-THIRD REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE
UNITED NATIONS
SEPTEMBER 25 2018**

Your Excellency Mrs. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés,
President of the Seventy-Third Regular Session of the General Assembly
of the United Nations;

Your Excellency Antonio Guterres,
Secretary General of the UN;

Sirs Heads of State and Governments;

Gentlemen Heads of Delegations;

Sirs Ministers;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

First of all, allow me to congratulate Ambassador María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, for her election as president of this General Assembly and wish her every possible success.

For me it is a great honor to be able to address you again as president of the Dominican Republic.

This is a special occasion for our country, because next year the Dominican Republic will be part, for the first time, of the Security Council of the United Nations, as a non-permanent member.

That is why I want to start by thanking, on behalf of the Dominican people and myself, the member countries of the UN for the support received to be part of the Security Council.

In particular, I would like to thank the members of the Group of Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, GRULAC, for the trust placed in us.

Our purpose during this period will be to contribute a Latin American and Caribbean voice to one of the premier instances for maintaining global peace.

Naturally, from now, we commit ourselves to enforcing, both in the Security Council and in this Assembly, the same unbreakable principles that guide us as a nation.

Respect for human rights, democracy, freedom and diversity will therefore be the beacon we will follow to guide our work in the Security Council.

We will do everything possible to honor the trust placed in us, being fully aware that stability and safety are priority objectives but also fragile, that must be preserved and to which advance is made step-by-step, day-by-day.

We are clear that a space dealing with issues that can alter the history and destiny of millions of people has no room for easy and drastic unreal solutions.

In this context, our country will always be a body of dialogue, understanding, and search for peaceful solutions. We are always willing to do what it takes to find common ground and support consensus, as the best tool for peace and development.

Therefore, at all times we will encourage peoples' reconciliation through mediation and democratic dialogue, thus opening spaces towards a future of shared lasting peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the founding of the United Nations Organization, just over seven decades ago, it has played a central role in keeping a more stable and secure world for the human population across the globe.

However, we can never consider this stability as a definitive achievement, we cannot lower our guard knowing, for example, that only in our Latin American and Caribbean region 35% of the population still belongs to the so-called "vulnerable class", which means that any setback can send them right back into poverty.

Furthermore, in terms of security, it is fair to recognize that, like so many other things, it is by far evenly distributed. We all know that there are territories in the Americas, and everywhere in the world, where living peacefully and without fear is almost a utopia, because of the control exercised by organized crime in those territories.

What can we then do to build a more incrementally stable world?

What measures to take so that widespread safety is not a privilege of a few nations, but extends throughout the world reaching every region and village?

Obviously I'm not the only one who asks these questions. All present here do them.

Nor will I give definitive answers, because we can only find them working together.

What I will do is to briefly identify what I consider two of the main threats to stability and global security: climate change, drug trafficking and organized crime.

At first glance, they may seem very different phenomena from each other, of course. However, their level of complexity and global reach make them two of the main challenges facing humanity.

In both cases, the consequences are thousands of families destroyed, collateral damage on all aspects of human development and States overwhelmed by the magnitude of the challenge they must face.

Let's start by talking about the consequences of natural disasters.

These phenomena of nature are happening more and more frequently, we just have to open a newspaper, or turn on the television to find the effects of climate change wreaking havoc at one point or another of the planet.

From the typhoon that recently hit the Philippines with a force not seen in decades, to the cyclonic seasons that punish the Caribbean islands with more and more violence, there's not a safe spot on the planet.

Last year we saw how Hurricane Irma left Havana totally flooded and it took several weeks of heavy effort for to return to a semblance of normality.

As for Puerto Rico, the islands of Antigua and Barbuda, as well as others in the Caribbean, took several months to somewhat recover from the effects of Hurricane Maria, which not only brought economic losses, but claimed a considerable amount of human lives as well.

The Dominican Republic is strongly committed to prevent the consequences of climate change. As a result we are focusing simultaneously on three levels of action: local, national, and international.

Because the local level is where the daily life of people develops, it is here where tragedies epitomize a painful reality therefore it is here where the work of building, preparing and raising awareness must begin.

At this level, which along the national one, is where our government has more capacity of action, we are improving resilience and relocating the communities that live around our most important watersheds; highly vulnerable to weather phenomena.

We are also doing a great deal of local awareness work, such as training thousands of teachers and technicians who will promote sustainable development in their schools and communities.

At the national level we are also working tirelessly, both in our rapid reaction strategies, and in the prevention field. Thus, for instance, we are planting millions of trees across our territory, while investing in renewable energy as never before.

These measures not only support our economy but will as well help reduce our emissions of greenhouse gases by 25% by 2030. That goal fills us with satisfaction.

However, the fight against climate change is everyone's task and that is why this last scenario, the international scenario, is vital; it must be the broadest and most prevalent of the three. A space in which, if there is no political will, most of the efforts become useless and negatively impact all gains achieved at the local and national levels.

That is why I reiterate before this Assembly, the utmost importance of going beyond good intentions and focusing on concrete actions.

And among those actions, I want to once again highlight the urgency of financing and operationalizing initiatives such as the Warsaw International Mechanism of loss and damage that will make it possible to compensate for the destruction of infrastructure, ecosystems, and ease the vulnerability of our residents.

This fund is essential so that natural disasters do not destroy in a few hours what many nations have spent decades building.

I will give you just one example, keeping in mind that our case is not the most dramatic in the Caribbean region.

Last year, the passage of the storms Olga and Maria meant for our country the destruction of infrastructure built for a billion dollars. Imagine what that means for a country in which the annual budget of the State is already limited.

But above all, this fund will help protect the valuable lives of millions of human beings, bring peace of mind to their homes, allow them to have a future without the permanent uncertainty of feeling threatened every time they see the rain coming.

For all this, we consider it inevitable that those countries that have contributed most to the emission of gases responsible for climate change are those that, proportionally, contribute to this fund established to mitigate its effects.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I described earlier, we consider drug trafficking and organized crime as a threat to global security and stability of a magnitude similar to climate change.

The trafficking of illicit substances claims thousands of lives every year, and especially young lives, extremely valuable for our countries. But if this were not enough, it permeates our institutions, unbalances our economies, threatens our values and brings nothing but degradation and destruction to our social fabric.

Wherever organized crime arrives, the security and peace of our people deteriorates over time.

Therefore, in this area, as with climate change, the fight against drugs must be carried out at the three mentioned levels: local, national and international, in order to achieve effective results.

In the case of our country, local intervention is focused on prevention campaigns and the education of our young people, supporting them with training and entrepreneurial opportunities, while improving the

neighborhoods in which they reside and recovering public spaces for people to use; all this with the goal of keeping the most vulnerable population from crime networks.

At the national level, the security forces and our National Drug Control Department are battling throughout the entire territory as part of a comprehensive plan to strengthen actions against drug trafficking.

Among other initiatives, we are acquiring new high-tech equipment and reinforcing security in our ports and airports with more agents and controls, as well as carrying out in-depth interventions in areas with the highest incidence of crime.

Parallel to this, we have advanced with the approval of a law against money laundering and financing of terrorism, based on the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force, GAFILAT, with emphasis on prevention of, and fight against, money laundering to which the drug traffickers resort to make their operations profitable.

And finally, at the international level, we have bilateral and multilateral agreements with the United States, the European Union, and the SICA countries; we participate as well in the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative, all with the objective of coordinating efforts and improving our efficiency in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime.

Thanks to initiatives like these, we are better prepared to fight together against this evil that threatens the integrity of our economies and our democracies.

However, we must insist on the need to deepen this international coordination.

There is much we can move forward if we join efforts, share information and support each other in this work.

And here we also understand that showing greater commitment is the responsibility of the countries that, with their domestic demand for narcotics, have set in motion the international machinery of drug trafficking and organized crime.

We cannot ignore the fact that it is precisely developing nations that act as the first barrier to containing drug trafficking, thus protecting the most developed countries.

To fulfill this role, our countries expend billions of dollars each year, which, however, are never enough in the face of the resources deployed by organized crime, which is undoubtedly a key factor in the social disintegration experienced by many of our countries.

As in the case of climate change, it is the more developed countries with more consumption capacity that must deploy more resources, cooperation,

and political will, if we really mean to fight this phenomenon with any hope of victory.

In combating the effects of drug trafficking and climate change, we will be solving some of the structural causes that lead countries to deepen poverty and social inequality.

If the United Nations and the developed countries want to help fight poverty more comprehensively and frankly, these two fronts are a smart, humane and cost-effective way to do it.

To them, to their responsibility and solidarity, we appeal once again from this rostrum, to make our planet a safer place.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Climate change, drug trafficking, poverty, social inequality, and mass migration are all interrelated problems that we must deal with urgently.

As we have pointed out today, the best and perhaps the only way to do this is to act upon all levels of response to the problem.

So that the agreements signed in a space like the UN have a real impact on the life of the people.

So that the real needs of our people find expression in their national and even international institutions.

Therefore, we must all continue to act, according to our abilities but without rest and with the same objective: to create a world that is increasingly stabled, safer, and more developed.

A world where all men and all women can carryout their life project.

This is the ultimate goal for which the Dominican Republic will continue to work.

In our towns, in our neighborhoods and in all our cities.

With our immediate neighbors, with all of you members of this General Assembly.

And next year, also as part of the Security Council of the UN, in this new role that we will be honored to assume.

Thank you very much.