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Statement by H.E. Henry L. Mac Donald

The Permanent Representative of the Republic of Suriname to the United Nations

on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

on agenda item 23

ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

SECOND COMMITTEE

New York

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Please check against delivery!
Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on agenda item 23 regarding the Eradication of Poverty and other Development Issues.

2. I would like to use this opportunity to congratulate you and the members of the Bureau upon your election. I also thank the Secretary General for the comprehensive report on this agenda item.

3. I further wish to state at the outset that CARICOM aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

4. The Secretary General’s report highlights some global developments of concern, basically informing us that eradication of poverty and hunger is becoming the greatest global challenge. Please allow me to share some of the findings:
   a. Although the Millennium Development Goals target has been achieved at the global level, progress has been uneven, and there are 1.2 billion people still living in extreme poverty. It is projected that, by 2015, about 970 million people will still be living on less than $1.25 a day in countries classified as low or middle income. Estimates are that nearly 870 million people, one in eight in the world, are chronically hungry. While extreme poverty has declined significantly, the share of the world’s population vulnerable to falling into extreme poverty, has increased to about 50 per cent.
   b. In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of people living in extreme poverty is steadily on the rise. Some countries have moved further away from the Millennium Development Goals.
   c. The ILO Global Employment Trends 2013 showed that global unemployment figures were rising.
   d. In the last 30 years, inequality has worsened within many countries.
   e. Last but not least, Official Development Assistance declined in 2011 and 2012.

Mr. Chairman,

5. The theme “Full employment and decent work for all” for the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017) corresponds well with the vision expressed by the Executive Director of ECLAC, at the recently held event on the post-2015 development agenda at the UNHQ in NY, in which she claims that “Our generation has an unprecedented opportunity to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger in the coming decade. Not only is this an ethical and moral obligation, but it is the only basis for true development and shared prosperity”.

6. CARICOM shares the view that the Millennium Development Goals made poverty reduction a policy priority for every country, and the core objective of development at the global level and that this momentum needs to be sustained. In this regard
CARICOM remains committed to the MDGs, taking note of the outcome document of the recently concluded “General Assembly Special Event to evaluate the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals”.

7. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 initiated an inclusive intergovernmental process to develop a set of sustainable development goals to be presented to the General Assembly for its consideration during this session. CARICOM monitors this process closely, particularly through its participating member states in the Open Working Group and reiterates its full commitment to the process and the elaboration of the Post-2015 development agenda in which eradication of poverty and hunger should remain a central focus.

Mr. Chairman,

8. CARICOM believes that supporting investments in sustainable agricultural and rural development increases food production and the income of the poor and reduces poverty and hunger. However, eliminating rural poverty requires the diversification of rural economies, enhancing skill sets of rural populations, enabling them to transition to other employment sectors as labor demands shift.

9. The region acknowledges as well that resolution of particular regional food security problems requires complementary inputs and coordination among different sectors such as education, health, trade, industry, and infrastructure and at different levels, including household, community, national and international.

10. In this regard CARICOM Heads of Government agreed on the need to have an integrated, multi-sector and regional approach towards food and nutrition security. For this purpose the Caribbean Regional Policy for Food and Nutrition Security (policy framework 2011-2025) has been developed with support by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization. The policy is focused on direct action to immediately tackle hunger for the most vulnerable and medium and long-term sustainable agriculture, food security, nutrition and rural development programs to eliminate the root causes of hunger and poverty, including through the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.

11. The emphasis on agriculture has also as objective to counter food price increases, to promote consumption of regionally produced food, to make the region nutrition secure and to reverse the high incidence of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) now prevalent in the Region.

Mr. Chairman,

12. Environmental threats are a serious risk to poverty reduction. CARICOM countries and communities are particularly vulnerable to climate change, degradation of ecosystems and disasters such as floods, coastal storms, and changes in agricultural productivity. Small Island developing States, in particular in our region, already
vulnerable to economic shocks owing to economic size and external market dependence, have been among the most affected due to economic losses from disasters, which have been increasing rapidly and are more than 15 times higher than they were in the 1950s, according to the SG’s report.

13. Given the high vulnerability of CARICOM countries to climate change impacts many of our member states are already faced with adaptation measures to guarantee the safety and livelihood of our people. This places an extra burden on our existing limited budgets, developmental priorities and needs. In this regard we look forward to speedy operationalization of the Green Climate Fund, established by the UNFCCC.

Mr. Chairman,

14. CARICOM reiterates its view that the greatest asset available to the poor against poverty is their ability to work. According to the SG’s report the recent global crisis and the weakening of the global recovery have markedly worsened the employment situation. Global unemployment has increased by 28 million people since the crisis, reaching in 2012 a total of 200 million people. Another 5.1 million people are expected to join the jobless ranks in 2013. The majority of workers in developing countries remain trapped in jobs with low incomes and lack of basic social protection, which leave them vulnerable to social and economic risks. The number of working poor has continued to decline, although at a slower pace than before the crisis. Unemployment among young people has continued to increase in many countries.

15. Efficiently managed social protection schemes and socially targeted public spending are thus effective complements to other poverty-reduction efforts.

16. In this regard increased attention must be given to improving social integration of disadvantaged segments of society including older persons, women, indigenous and tribal peoples, young people, people with disabilities and individuals working in the informal economy in low-paying, unproductive and often hazardous occupations. Improving access to basic social services, health and education and the elimination of systemic obstacles to upward economic, social and political mobility empowers poor people to break the cycle of poverty.

Mr. Chairman,

17. CARICOM supports the view that the advancement of micro-, small- and medium-size enterprises, which are the most dynamic sources of employment, should be promoted, by implementing policies that facilitate access of smallholders and entrepreneurs to credit, resources, technical and extension services, insurance and markets;
18. We are concerned though that the economic recession adversely impact investments in health, education and skills training, which are among the critical factors to empower those living in poverty and which are crucial for making people employable, allowing them to gain access to decent work, escape poverty and promoting social inclusion and greater equity in society.

Mr. Chairman,

19. The eradication of poverty should remain at the core of the UN development work as well as in the Post 2015 development agenda. This agenda must draw on the lessons learned from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the continued impacts of the global financial and economic crisis and take into account other sustainable development aspects such as food security, environmental sustainability, the creation of opportunities for full and decent employment, the promotion of equality and social justice, and the promotion of sustained, inclusive and equitable growth for all segments of the population.

20. We emphasize the need for a strengthened global partnership for development, taking into account the national priorities and ownership of development strategies of developing countries. In the globalized international environment, inclusive growth in developing countries also requires open, fair and development-friendly trade systems and access to technology.

21. CARICOM member states are concerned with the classification of all but Haiti, as middle income countries on the basis of criteria such as per capita income. In our view these criteria should be revisited taking into account the vulnerabilities of the region as highlighted earlier.

22. We stress the urgent need for the international community, particularly the developed countries, to take effective measures to allocate new and additional resources to assist developing countries to respond efficiently to both the imminent and long-term challenges of food security. We reaffirm the importance to develop strategies for South-South cooperation in food security.

23. Debt relief and debt restructuring for developing countries would help them maintain their investments in human capital important for their continued economic growth and economic development leading to poverty reduction at the global level. Austerity measures targeting public expenditure have threatened to exacerbate the situation of high levels of indebtedness.

In closing Mr. Chairman,

24. Given that employment, decent work and social protection should be more prominent in the post-2015 development agenda the United Nations system should continue to give priority to implementing the system-wide Plan of Action for the Second Decade, in collaboration with Member States and all other stakeholders.
Across the system, efforts should continue to focus on supporting the Social Protection Floor Initiative and pro-poor investments in human capital, job creation and economic growth, particularly through experience and knowledge-sharing and international cooperation.

25. Finally, CARICOM welcomes the technical assistance provided by ECLAC and other UN agencies, funds and programs to countries in the region on social protection systems and invite them to consider region-wide approaches in their programming.

I thank you, for your kind attention.