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Statement by H.E. Delano Bart, QC
Permanent Representative of
Saint Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations

on behalf of the
Caribbean Community
(CARICOM)

on agenda item 69 (b)

PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:
human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the
effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

THIRD COMMITTEE

New York
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I address the Committee today on behalf of the member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on agenda item 69 (b) entitled Promotion and Protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

At the outset please allow me to congratulate you Mr. Chairman and the other members of the bureau on your well-deserved election. We are convinced that under your wise leadership and with the assistance of the Vice-Chairs the committee is working towards a successful conclusion of its deliberations. Let me assure you of our delegations’ continued cooperation and support.

CARICOM appreciates the comprehensive reports submitted by the Secretary General on the issues pertaining to the subject under discussion.

Mr. Chairman,

The promotion and protection of human rights for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, has guided countries individually and collectively to ensure the realization of all human rights for all.

At many United Nations Meetings and Conferences Member States reaffirmed their commitment to respecting and promoting human rights.

Despite many achievements in the field of human rights, in particular the civil and political rights, it is regrettable to note that today the world is still plagued with incidents of ethnic hatred and genocide. Many are still deprived of food, shelter, access to healthcare, education and employment. Poverty continues to violate human dignity.

Much more remains to be done to materialize the economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to education, food, health, and housing and more importantly the right to development.

Mr. Chairman,

The Special Rapporteur on the right to education rightly points out in his report that the right to education is among the most widely recognized international rights. Worldwide great strides have been made with regard to education. Despite this progress disparities still persist in some countries when it relates to access, non-discrimination and good quality education.

The Human Development Report 2013 states that experience has shown that the growth in the Human Development Index value is associated with growth in public spending on education.
Education is not only crucial for the empowerment of women, but also to foster a culture of peace in order to avoid conflicts, and embrace the principle of peaceful coexistence. Education is also crucial in poverty eradication. We therefore concur with the Special Rapporteur that “education is the best investment a country can make”.

In our efforts to realize the right to education we should therefore focus on not only providing quality education, but to also align it with the needs of the labour market. Equally important is addressing the entire continuum of education and learning- from early childhood development to lifelong learning. Aspects to a comprehensive education strategy should therefore include not only formal education, but also non-formal education, vocational and skills training and addressing literacy.

The Special Rapporteur further notes in his report that poverty is the greatest obstacle to the enjoyment of the right to education as well as the right to development and CARICOM could not agree more with him. In some cases parents or legal guardians have to make painful decisions of not sending their children to get an education because of a lack of resources. In other instances children attend school hungry without a healthy and nutritious meal. Education outcomes will undoubtedly suffer if poverty eradication is not addressed.

CARICOM is convinced that the achievement of sustainable development cannot be advanced without the respect and promotion for human rights, in particular the right to education. In the outcome document of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Rio last year, the international community affirmed in paragraph 229 that full access to quality education is essential to achieving sustainable development.

Analysis has shown that progress towards the education-related Millennium Development Goals remains limited. In working towards securing a future we want, it is imperative that the right to education receives the utmost importance in the future development agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

Realization of the right to adequate food, within the broader context of the right to an adequate standard of living, as enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is also crucial in efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger and achieve sustainable development.

While States have a duty to respect, protect and realize the right to food one cannot ignore today’s interdependent world where guaranteeing the right to food is closely linked with external factors in areas such as trade, due to inter alia unfair trade practices and subsidies and investments and the susceptibility of
national economies to external shocks. The impact of the economic and financial crisis also places undue pressure on the enjoyment of several human rights for rights holders.

An international enabling environment is therefore crucial to complement national efforts in guaranteeing the right to food. The importance of international cooperation in this regard is essential. An aspect also recognized in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

In addressing the challenges worldwide with regard to access to adequate food, the Caribbean region is convinced of the valuable contribution of a strong agriculture sector. The holding of the Twelfth Caribbean Week of Agriculture earlier this month from 4 – 12 October in Georgetown, Guyana has reinforced the significance of agriculture to the development of CARICOM and as a contribution to food security and nutrition. The observance under the theme – Linking the Caribbean for Regional Food and Nutrition Security and Rural Development – reaffirmed the need to urgently address the peculiar constraints the region faces to enhancing production and productivity through increased efforts towards modernization as well as in achieving a reorientation of the place, role and function of agriculture in society. The contribution of women to agriculture was also highlighted. Women in agribusiness were even referred to as the “new sexy” in development circles, however it was acknowledged that much more attention should be paid to guaranteeing the rights of women.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM Member States will remain actively engaged in the intergovernmental process on strengthening the effective functioning of the treaty body system when the process resumes. We await with much anticipation the mandated report which we expect will contain detailed information on costs assessments for the requirement of making the system more effective as well as for capacity building. On numerous occasions the region has stressed the importance of capacity building in assisting in particular small States with their treaty obligations, including for reporting.

CARICOM member states aware of their obligations under international law reiterate their commitment to the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in their territories.

Challenges such as decreasing levels of revenues, especially in the tourism, mining and financial services sectors, restricted access to credit and the servicing of high levels of external debt, unrealistic criteria used by IFI’s and some development partners for graduation, such as per capita income to determine a country’s level of development and the associated loss of access to grant and concessional funding as well as the effects of climate change threaten to halt and in some cases reverse economic growth in the countries of the Caribbean region.
However CARICOM remains resolute to continue making strides in socio-economic development and preserving the proud record of the region in the area of human development, respect for the rule of law, democratic norms and human rights.

In closing Mr. Chairman,

The Caribbean region also has a long history of celebrating our identity and diversity through culture. In August this year, with Suriname as the host, the XI edition of CARIFESTA, a cultural extravaganza, was held with the participation of our friends from Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe.

At the opening of this festival to celebrate our art and culture the Secretary General of the Caribbean Community expressed the hope that the CARIFESTA experience would “inspire to a new understanding of who we are as a people and of our great Caribbean Civilization where Culture is our Passion; Prosperity our Mission; And Integration our Vision”.

The theme for this CARIFESTA “Culture for Development” emphasized our conviction that without culture there could be no long term development. The celebration through culture is equally important in our efforts to promoting respect for human rights.

I thank you.