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PLENARY SESSION OF THE IX SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

REMARKS BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY  
AND HEAD OF DELEGATION OF GRENADA,  
NICKOLAS TANG CONWAY STEELE

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, President of the United States of America

Vice President Kamala Harris

Heads of States and Governments

His Excellency Anthony Blinken

Colleague Ministers

Heads of Delegations

National Summit Coordinators, Ambassadors

Ladies and gentlemen

I bring you greetings from Prime Minister Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith C. Mitchell and the government and people of Grenada.

Prime Minister sends his regrets. He would have loved to attend the Summit but general elections are being held in less than two weeks – on June 23rd. You will all agree that the democratic process supersedes the multilateral.

Let me place on record my delegation's gratitude to our host, for your hospitality and the excellent arrangements for this Summit. We are happy to attend in person, cautious as we slowly emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Excellencies, the overarching theme of this 9th Summit "Building a Sustainable, Resilient and Equitable Future" is reminiscent of the themes chosen by our administration to celebrate Grenada's 47th Anniversary of Independence in 2021 – "Rebuilding Together a Safer, More Resilient Nation in These Challenging Times" and our 48th in 2022 – "Overcoming Adversity, Safeguarding Livelihoods, Protecting our Future".

This Summit presents an opportunity for Grenada to join with nations in the Americas, to focus our collective efforts on ways to address the challenges placed on our individual countries by the

pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the effects of climate change, and other crises. These lay bare before us our vulnerabilities and leave our administrations grappling with a citizenry that requires social, energy and health security; and fiscal, environmental and physical protection, based on the realities of lived experiences.

Excellencies, Grenada acknowledges that the five political commitments are a consolidated series of ambitious objectives, that would guide our agenda and serve as a roadmap for the hemisphere over the next few years. And we commend our National Summit Coordinators and diplomats who negotiated them over these past few months in the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG).

These commitments provide an opportunity for governments to accept the responsibility of safeguarding the welfare of its citizens, by strengthening democratic institutions, providing economic opportunities, leveraging the use of technology in development, and ensuring inclusion in all our social programs.

Excellencies, we cannot deny that the geopolitical landscape of the Americas has changed since the First Summit in Miami, almost 30 years ago in 1994.

That said, Excellencies, Grenada takes seriously its commitment to upholding the principles of democratic governance. We strongly avow to closing the digital divide to realize the fulfilment of a regional agenda for digital transformation, which provides value to the average citizen. We are committed to implementing the action plan on health and resilience in the Americas and supports the implementation of the climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies of our green future. Grenada commits to incorporating fairness into any sustainable energy transition plan and project we undertake.

Excellencies, to achieve these objectives, small island developing and low-lying coastal states like Grenada must have access to concessionary financing. We call on all our friends in this hemisphere to assist in identifying, developing, and advancing specific and distinct climate finance access windows for us. Excellencies this is not a new call. Every SIDS supports such an initiative.

And we thank the United States for the new initiative announced – the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity – to benefit the countries of the region.

Grenada believes in multilateralism and is eager to move from talk to action, to provide a more inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous future for our people, and build on hemispheric solidarity. Grenada is mindful, however, that each sovereign nation must acknowledge and be guided according to its circumstance, its resources, and within its own legal framework.

We, however, ask the following: How meaningful can discussions of resilient health systems be without the presence of Cuba at the table, undeniably the country that has the most to offer with respect to Human resource in Health?

Likewise, is it possible to have meaningful conversations on energy security without Venezuela, the country with one of the largest petroleum reserves?

COVID-19 taught us that we are all in this together. How can we then start our first significant hemispheric gathering on a policy of exclusion instead of the lessons of inclusion? Excellencies we

grow tired of having the same objections and making similar request. Please let us turn a new leaf today.

There is that one hungry child in almost all of our capital cities that we will have to look in those sorrowful eyes upon our return, and answer in our hearts of hearts that we made a difference today; that her tomorrow is a better and safer one. How many families are losing their savings because of the inflation and will not be able to send their children to university anymore because we were slow? What do we tell them? And finally if there is another global pandemic in our lifetime history will not forgive us.

After dealing with the immediate, we must still tackle the existing threats of climate change as well as access to rational financing for mitigation and sustainable development.

I speak frankly and directly among friends because that's what friends should do. True democracy recognizes and respects our differences.

Thank you, Excellencies.