



STATEMENT

BY

**HER EXCELLENCY, DR. JUNE SOOMER
SAINT LUCIAN AMBASSADOR TO CARICOM AND OECS**

**ON
SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 2015
IN
MILAN, ITALY**

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the government and people of Saint Lucia, I would like to thank the organisers for the excellent arrangements made for this meeting. Chairman, the Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Dr Kenny D. Anthony, who has lead responsibility for Sustainable Development and Climate Change within CARICOM, and on whose behalf I present this statement, has spent the last four years raising the awareness of the deep and serious concerns on the impacts of climate change on Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In all of his submissions he has asked for world leaders to act courageously, resolutely and decisively to save our planet, and in particular the lives and livelihoods of the citizens of SIDS.

He has been joined in his advocacy by all CARICOM leaders like the current Chairman of the Bahamas who has called climate change an existential threat to the Caribbean. Chairman of the nine-member Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Dominica's Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit, has declared that climate change is an issue that affects the very survival of small island states in the Caribbean.

Our leaders have made their appeals based on the fact that for most CARICOM countries total annual rainfall is projected to decrease by an average of 12 percent with a two degree Celsius warming. We read the assessment reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) with a sense of gravity as it shows that climate change will negatively impact every element of our lives and our economies, from public health to food security. We are already living that reality. In the particular case of the Bahamas, which has 80 percent of its land mass within one metre of mean sea level, climate change and sea level rises some five feet in the Bahamas which means that 80 percent of the Bahamas as we know it will disappear.

Prime Minister notes that many of our beaches have already started to disappear as a result of sea level rise. A recent World Bank report estimated that in some areas of St. Vincent and the Grenadines 18-30 metres of beach have been lost over the last nine years. Our coral reefs, on which we depend for our tourism and our fisheries, are under stress from

bleaching caused by oceans becoming more acidic as they absorb more carbon dioxide. Fish migration patterns are starting to change.

The annual extreme hurricanes keep our highly indebted vulnerable countries in a constant cycle of repair and recovery. One hurricane can wipe out as much as 203% of our GDP in 24 hours, as happened with Hurricane Ivan in Grenada.

It is estimated that the total capital cost of sea level rise in the CARICOM region by the year 2050 could be anywhere between US\$ 26 billion and US\$ 61 billion, with recurring costs increasing between US\$ 4 billion and US\$ 6 billion. The costs to Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Dominica to rebuild or relocate our seaports and airports because of sea level rise by the year 2050 are estimated to rise to as high as 6% of our GDP.

A 2 metre sea level rise in CARICOM, which is more than likely at the current levels of greenhouse gas emissions, will result in over 3,000 square kilometres of land being lost, more than 233 tourism resorts being

damaged, over 3% of agricultural land being lost, loss or damage to 31 of our airports and the land surrounding 35 of our ports being inundated. If we combine sea level rise with the storm surge from an extreme hurricane, we are now looking at over 1 million people being at risk to flooding and over 50% of major tourism resorts prone to serious damage.

Based on this grim, reality Caribbean leaders have called for:

1. A new international, legally binding agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that is in the form of a protocol and is applicable to all Parties.
2. Provisions that address the specific needs and special circumstances of Small Island Developing States.
3. Recognition of the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibility, so that the greater burden for addressing climate change falls on those countries that bear the greatest responsibility for the problem.

4. Provisions for supporting the adaptation needs of vulnerable developing countries, like ours, including provision of adequate, predictable, new and additional finance, technology and capacity building support, and strengthening of the institutional arrangements.
5. Loss and Damage as a distinct and fundamental element, separate from adaptation.
6. An explicit objective of limiting long-term the global average temperature increase to below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, supported by mitigation commitments that represent a feasible pathway to achieving that goal.
7. Provision of support for capacity building and technology development and transfer to Small Island Developing States.
8. Clear and explicit provisions for the Parties to fulfil and continuously enhance their mitigation commitments over time.
9. An obligation by developed country parties to take the lead in scaling-up the provision of adequate, predictable, new and additional financial resources, and opportunities for other Parties willing to do so, to also contribute to scaling up climate finance.

10. Quicker access to climate finance. We are still a long distance away from the commitment of US\$ 100 billion annually in climate finance by the year 2020, which was pledged by developed countries.

11. Adequate provisions for measuring, reporting and verification of performance on commitments and a compliance regime.

In return Chairman, we in the Caribbean will play our part in reducing our minuscule contributions to global greenhouse gas emissions by reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. Our ambitious sustainable energy programmes will facilitate our transition away from the use of oil and oil derivatives for energy to more renewable sources like geothermal, wind, solar and hydro. We are on the way to developing carbon neutral countries.

Chairman this global climate change crisis requires urgent and conclusive action. We join with the economies of vulnerable SIDS and low-lying countries in calling on the international community to assist us in saving the lives of our people.