

**PRESENTATION BY AMBASSADOR BAYNEY KARRAN
AT OAS ROUNDTABLE ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Mr. Secretary General,
Fellow Panellists,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Barely 2 weeks ago, at the plenary session of the OAS General Assembly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guyana, the Honourable Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, urged that Climate Change be placed front and center of the OAS agenda. So, I welcome this important and timely discussion and I certainly appreciate being with such a distinguished panel.

The United Nations Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has identified the Small Island and Low-lying coastal developing states as particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change in all of its reports.

As we now know from the IPCC's Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) global temperatures will continue to rise and sea levels will rise more quickly than previously forecast, endangering coastal cities which are a feature of the Caribbean.

The fact that these effects have been forecast to intensify is cause for alarm. It means that climate change threatens the very existence of the Caribbean,

as we know it, if it is left unaddressed.

CARICOM countries are already painfully aware of the impact. In the past 10 years, we have seen significant loss of life and property due to extreme weather events. In 2004, Hurricane Ivan affected approximately 90 per cent of the housing stock in Grenada; in 2005, floods not seen in a century hit Guyana, exacting damage and losses to the tune of 60 per cent of its GDP. In 2010 hurricane Thomas resulted in more than half a billion US dollars damage in the Windward Islands, mainly in St Lucia, and also produced massive flood damage and dozens of deaths from cholera outbreaks in Haiti. Just six months ago, Dominica, Saint Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines suffered unprecedented high intensity rainfall, floods and landslides with loss of life and extensive damage estimated in excess of US\$200 million.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

According to World Bank estimates, by the year 2080, the economic damage to CARICOM countries annually from climate change will amount to 11.3% of the total annual GDP of all CARICOM countries. Nearly one-fifth of these losses are likely to be linked to the specific effects of sea level rise – loss of land as well as damage to infrastructure including tourism infrastructure and housing. The loss from climate change-related disasters such as floods and hurricanes will be \$5 billion at 2007 prices.

The damage sustained in the above mentioned areas and in other economic sectors would have a ripple effect, expanding into areas as diverse as poverty,

crime, migration, loss of investment, and fiscal stability.

What is worse is that much of the damage will target strategic industries. For example, over 50 percent of the labour forces are engaged in tourism and in agriculture, so if these industries are incapacitated the loss of income would be catastrophic.

With regard to fishery, warmer seas and record hurricane seasons have already devastated more than half of the coral reefs in the Caribbean according to a 2008 Report by the World Conservation Union. Coral reefs directly or indirectly sustain a large share of marine life.

Climate Change needs to be clearly highlighted as one of the most important and urgent challenges, not merely for development and poverty eradication, but for the survival of Caribbean over the long term. The situation is real and it requires urgent action.

As soon as we have begun to describe the effects of Climate Change we can immediately recognize the obvious overlap between the Climate Action agenda and the post-2015 Development Agenda. Climate Change is simultaneously a major threat as well as a major development issue.

Climate change and climate action will determine whether the levels of development progress that have already been achieved can be sustained, as well as whether post-2015 development goals can be achieved. Action to address climate change can have profound implications for development choices and outcomes.

Due to their urgency and relevance, it is vital that Climate Action be integrated into Sustainable Development frameworks.

The question therefore is not if, but how to include climate change in the post-2015 development framework.

And what, you might ask, has CARICOM been doing to tackle Climate Change? CARICOM firmly supports the approach to synchronize climate change mitigation with economic development. In fact, as long ago as 2009, CARICOM leaders subscribed to the Liliendaal Declaration on Climate Change. It is named after the place in Guyana where the Headquarters of CARICOM is located, and is the instrument by which CARICOM member states have committed themselves to collective action in the fight against climate change.

The Liliendaal Declaration calls for all parties to the United Nations' Framework Conference on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to work to arrive at a comprehensive agreement for long-term stabilization of atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations, with specific limits on temperature increases and reductions on greenhouse gas emissions.

Taking into account the territorial characteristics of Belize, Guyana and Suriname, fifty percent of the land area of CARICOM is under forest cover. In the Liliendaal Declaration, CARICOM leaders have affirmed their commitment to forest conservation, avoided deforestation and sustainable management of forests (or REDD plus) as essential measures for mitigating the effects of climate change. This is in keeping with the major positive

outcome of COP 19 at Warsaw which was the establishment of a (REDD Plus) Action Framework.

A number of Caribbean countries have implemented individual programmes to deal with Climate Change. For example, Jamaica recently established a new Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change and has been aggressively pursuing funding support opportunities, being one of the first to tap into the Adaptation Fund. Cuba has been in the forefront of disaster risk management. Dominica has shown how a small island can engage in REDD Plus. Several countries have developed, or are developing, National Adaptation Plans. Guyana, since 2008, has been demonstrating how a new model of development can combine social and economic progress with combatting climate change. Through a Low Carbon Development Strategy we have been able to maintain 99% of our forest, which is an area larger than England, while earning revenue for the forest carbon services these forests provide. In renewable energy we have also set ourselves the goal of reducing energy related emissions by 92%. Our Low Carbon Development Strategy enables us to marry economic development to climate action initiatives.

So our experience has been, firstly, that a transition to low carbon development can be a positive development choice – and that proper partnership with the international community can play a part in boosting what ultimately has to be a domestically led effort.

Second, while we have a legitimate expectation that the international community should provide financial and technical resources to help us fight

climate change, perhaps we should not place total reliance on them for assistance. We therefore have to take urgent action at home while we continue to push for greater action on the part of the developed world.

In this regard, the Liliendaal Declaration asserts that adaptation and capacity building must be prioritized and a formal and well financed framework be established to address the adaptation needs of vulnerable countries, particularly the SIDS and Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

The Liliendaal Declaration addresses the need for financial support to SIDS to enhance their capacities to respond to the challenges brought on by climate change and to access the technologies that will be required to undertake needed mitigation actions and to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.

The Declaration contains a number of other elements which are too lengthy to enumerate in this presentation but I would wish to make brief mention of just three other areas. Firstly, CARICOM Heads have committed to strengthen our educational institutions to provide training, education, research and development programmes in climate change and disaster risk management, particularly in renewable and other forms of alternative energy, forestry, agriculture, tourism, health, coastal zone management and water resources management in order to increase the Region's capacity to build resilience and adapt to climate change.

Secondly, they are committed to providing more effective preparedness for responses to natural disasters through the development of better risk assessment and material coordination along with the streamlining of risk reduction initiatives. They strongly support the streamlining of all climate change funding mechanisms so as to include the vulnerability index in their formulae in order to better facilitate SIDS' access to financial resources.

Thirdly, CARICOM is firmly convinced that the global response to climate change should be undertaken on the basis of common but differentiated responsibility as well as historical responsibility and that it should not compromise the ability of SIDS to pursue Sustainable Development. Moreover, the cost of addressing climate change should be equitably shared, and it should not perpetuate poverty.

At the present time we are concerned that pledges made at the landmark Copenhagen conference in 2009 remain largely unmet, and the recent so-called fast start financing of \$30 billion from 2010-13 was really old ODA finance recycled, not new and additional as promised. The subsequent UNFCCC decision to establish a Green Climate Fund since 2011 has not seen its operationalization three years later.

In addition, a great deal of Clean Development Mechanism funding has gone to industrial gas destruction projects in wealthier emerging economies -and has generated healthy profits for companies- but has led to little sustainable development. Negotiations surrounding this issue have now broken down.

SO TO CONCLUDE:

We have a busy round of international engagements coming up: the UN summit in September, along with pivotal meetings in Peru, Samoa, Japan and France.

In addition to what has gone before, some of the perspectives the Caribbean will be bringing to those deliberations would be to seek to ensure the major unresolved issue of:

Firstly: Financing to help vulnerable developing countries mitigate and adapt to climate change. There is still no clarity by developed countries on the pledged scaling up of climate finance to \$100 Billion by 2020. To date there have been no time-bound commitments for the operationalization or capitalization of the Green Climate Fund.

Secondly: Financing for adaptation also remains a critical issue. With the collapse of carbon market prices, revenue to the Adaptation Fund under the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol has dried up.

Thirdly: Another major issue is the anticipated global agreement applicable to all and which is expected by December 2015. Parties have so far barely managed to identify the elements that should frame that agreement. These include differentiated responsibilities for developing countries, equity, mitigation commitments, finance, technology transfer and emission reduction targets that will close the 2 degree gap.

Finally, we wish to see initiatives that are needed to drive integration between development planning and strategies and climate and planning and strategies.

Greater coherence in the twin objectives of financing for development and climate change finance will also be required, along with more linkages across governments in order to give effect to these measures.

I thank you.

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