

After spate of recent disasters, facts of climate change 'impossible to deny' Caribbean nations tell UN

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While some continue to doubt the scientific assessments, the facts of climate change are impossible to deny, the President of Saint Lucia told the United Nations General Assembly today, echoing other leaders from the region who detailed the havoc extreme weather events are wreaking on their homelands and people.

Allen Michael Chastanet told the Assembly that the UN's promise to small island developing States is being tested today more than ever. "The world is experiencing extraordinary change at a breath-taking pace – change that is reshaping the way we live [...] and the very nature of peace and security." he said.

Calling the intensification of extreme weather events the "new normal," he recounted small islands' repeated warnings that an inadequate response to climate change would condemn future generations to certain doom. "I daresay, we do not have the luxury to be silent on this front anymore – we must act," he stressed.

"Never forget that we are all in a symbiotic relationship, we should all be our brothers' keeper," said Mr. Chastanet, offering condolences to Mexico, which faces a mounting death toll from recent earthquakes. Noting that the world is increasingly integrated, and economies, natural environment and people are all connected, he said: "a disruptive event in one country begets similar or worse events in neighbouring countries, and spreads, impacting us all and testing our social, political and economic systems."

He maintained that the international community "must change with the times," calling "unconscionable" the need to depend on commercial rates to rebuild broken economies. "The model has to change to allow the opportunity to build back stronger and more resilient, the infrastructure that can secure our futures and that of our people," exhorted the President. He asked the Assembly to remember that we share a common future – "a future that will only be secure if we meet threats, challenges and opportunities together, with greater cooperation and understanding."

[Full statement available here](#)



Louis Straker, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Integration of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly's seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

“Today, it is a barefaced insult to the intelligence and experience of the peoples of Island States and coastal areas to call climate change a hoax,” the Deputy Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines told the Assembly as he took the podium.

“Almost every year is hotter than the preceding one. Almost every hurricane season more intense. Almost every storm, drought and flood more destructive than the previous one,” said Louis Straker, pointing to the death and destruction wrought by the current hurricane season.

“They are the manifestations of climate change; the symptoms of the prescient predictions made by the overwhelming majority of scientists,” he stressed, reaffirming that small island developing States are the most vulnerable to climate change, while contributing the least to the emissions that cause it.

Turning to the [Paris Agreement](#), the Deputy Prime Minister underscored that it views any attempt to disavow the agreement designed to arrest climate change and assist the most affected as an act of hostility, saying “we draw a direct, causal connection between any such abdication and the future death and destruction that island states face as the result of increasingly frequent and intense weather events.”

Mr. Straker said his country puts the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) at the centre of its national development strategies. “In areas of climate change, pollution and biodiversity, we have banned Styrofoam products, banned the hunting of turtles, tightened restrictions on internationally permitted indigenous whaling activity, and implemented new coastal protection regulations,” he relayed, adding that by investing in geothermal and solar energy, it hopes to generate 80 per cent of its energy needs from renewable sources within the next three years.

[Full statement available here](#)



Wilfred Elrington, Attorney General and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Also addressing the Assembly, Wilfred Elrington, Belize’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, pointed to security and climate change as equally fundamental threats to his country’s survival.

“We have been at the forefront of the global fight to protect and preserve our shared natural environment against environmental degradation and climate change and to ensure sustainable use especially of our ocean which sustains life on earth” he said. He noted that the region is pioneering innovative approaches to build resilience and facilitate its transition to low and no carbon economies.

Mr. Elrington stated that Belize has embraced the [2030 Agenda](#) – launching its own strategy that integrates the [SDGs](#) and is complimentary to the Paris

Agreement. Mentioning that Belize has met several goals on road safety, marine protection and sustainable fisheries, he said “already we are seeing the dividends of that early investment in policy and action.”

Calling his country’s early accomplishments “mere benchmarks,” he explained that Belize knows that it must go “above and beyond” for its sustainable development. For that reason, it is setting even more ambitious targets. “At the Oceans Conference,” he said, “we announced our commitment to further strengthen the legislative and regulatory framework on fisheries; to increase marine reserves from three per cent to 10 per cent of our territorial waters; and to implement legislation to curb the use of plastics/microplastics.”

“Belize is committed to zero emissions growth in its forestry sector and aims to achieve 85 per cent renewables in electricity production by 2027,” he added.

[Full statement available here](#)



Maxine Pamela Ometa McClean, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Barbados, addresses the general debate of the seventy-second of the General Assembly. UN Photo/Cia Pak

For her part, Maxine Pamela Ometa McClean, Barbados’ Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, cautioned the Assembly about the ramifications of unchecked climate change, echoing past remarks on the existential threat faced by vulnerable small island developing States.

She noted that for years many leaders from small islands have warned of the inherent danger to lives, livelihoods and the very existence of sovereign nations without the sufficient action taken to reduce global emissions and provide support for resilience building in vulnerable countries. “This clarion call from the Caribbean was ignored.”

“Today,” she added “we bear witness to the results of this act of reckless indifference.” The Foreign Minister reported, not on a potential threat, but rather on the destructive impact of climate change on the globe, speaking specifically of the utter devastation of several small islands developing States in the Caribbean overwhelmed by an unprecedented wave of hurricanes.

“For Barbados and other [small island developing States], whether in the Caribbean, the Pacific, Asia or Africa, climate change is a matter of life or death,” Ms. McClean underscored, saying that the issue is for sterile debates and endless meetings but about loss of life and livelihood.

[Full statement available here](#)