

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

22 September 2017 –

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](#)

Mitigating climate change impacts vital for sustainable future, Somali leader urges UN Assembly

22 September 2017 – Noting that countries across the globe – including his own – continue to pay a dear price for acts of terrorism and violent extremism, the Prime Minister of Somalia urged global leaders to “spare no effort” to neutralize the growth and influence of terrorist groups.

“In Somalia, we have made significant strides, which have weakened the capacity of Al-Shabaab,” said Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire.

He added that to ensure the sustainability of such gains his nation is strengthening its military capacity and in that context, urge an ease of the sanctions against Somalia.

In his address, the Prime Minister also urged global leaders at the United Nations General Assembly for committing themselves to make sure that environmental degradation and impacts of climate change are addressed given their direct link to crop failure, vanishing water sources, extreme weather and devastating disasters.

Building a sustainable future, he expressed also depended on advancing the society. In that context, he noted Somalia’s initiatives for gender empowerment and ensuring the respect for human rights of all people, including through the establishment of national human rights institutions, as well as empowerment of youth and strengthening economic institutions.

Concluding his address, Prime Minister Khaire echoed the words of other world leaders, noting the need for reforms at the UN and said that reform efforts instituted by [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres would lead the Organization to achieve greater efficiency, dynamism and responsiveness.

[Full statement available here](#)

No time for scepticism, ‘but for decisive climate action,’ Ethiopia’s Prime Minister tells UN

22 September 2017 – Like many other countries, Ethiopia is dealing almost every day with the adverse impacts of climate change, its Prime Minister told

the United Nations General Assembly today, urging decisive action by the international community.

“Now is not the time to doubt the devastating impacts of climate change while millions of our fellow humans are losing their lives and their hard-won development achievements,” Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn said during the annual high-level debate.

“This is high time to act — and act urgently and decisively — to combat the adverse impacts of climate change, particularly its disproportionate adverse effect on the most vulnerable countries, which — as it has been repeatedly stated — bear almost no responsibility in causing climate change,” he added.

He noted that Ethiopia successfully dealt with the El Nino-induced drought in 2015, but is again facing the adverse impact of climate change.

While expressing appreciation to bilateral and multilateral partners for support, he said Ethiopia will continue to implement its national strategy of building a green and resilient economy.

As the President of the Security Council this month, he said, Ethiopia welcomed the unanimous adoption of the draft resolution it tabled on Wednesday. Through the resolution, the 15-member body reaffirmed its determination to pursue more prioritisation when evaluating, mandating and reviewing peacekeeping operations.

“As one of the leading troop contributing countries, Ethiopia attaches great importance to strengthening the role of United Nations peacekeeping to address challenges to international peace and security,” he said.

[Full statement available here](#)

Nordic leaders call for reform that places UN at the centre of global multilateralism

22 September 2017 – A reformed and strengthened United Nations is more than ever necessary to tackle the host of challenges confronting the world, from conflicts and terrorism to climate change and sustainable development, Nordic ministers told the General Assembly today.

“The need for a United Nations that seeks to save us from humanity’s worst impulses remains. However, in these days of uncertainty we must also learn from, and build on, what is positive in our world, and in the United Nations,” Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström told the Assembly’s 72nd

annual general debate.

“This is the moment for multilateralism, not unilateralism. We must grasp it or risk the consequences. The United Nations is at the centre of this effort. It is a tailor-made space for the world to find the solutions to the common challenges of our time. And, despite the sometimes justified, criticisms, it is clear that we still believe in the United Nations’ power.”

Founded to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and promote better standards of life in larger freedom, the UN has prevented a repetition of the catastrophic wars that preceded its founding, she noted. Extreme poverty has fallen to an historic low, life expectancy continues to climb and millions of people are reached every year with life-saving humanitarian assistance.

“The broad support for the Secretary-General’s reform agenda illustrates the importance we attach to an effective United Nations, its role at the centre of multilateralism, and as a platform for the delivery of our common commitments,” Ms. Wallström stressed.

[Full statement available here](#)



Gudlaugur Thor Thordharson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland, addresses the general debate of the General Assembly’s seventy-second session. UN Photo/Cia Pak

Icelandic Foreign Minister Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson also recalled the UN’s founding amid the catastrophe of world war.

“Just as this great building was renovated so successfully a few years ago, so too must the UN be renovated and made fit for purpose in the modern era.

“We strongly support the work of the Secretary-General in management reform, development reform, and his sustaining peace agenda,” he said.

“We live in a world of opportunity: Never have we had such potential to end poverty and hunger, to end human rights violation, to focus on the people striving for a decent life. We can either succeed or we can fail. It is a choice, it is a decision. This is our responsibility, this is our task.”

[Full statement available here](#)

[Hungary, at UN, says roots of](#)

terrorism must be tackled; warns 'migratory waves' bring terrorists to Europe

22 September 2017 – The migration crisis and associated threat of terrorism are the greatest threats ever faced by the European Union, Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Hungary, told the United Nations today, denouncing those that encourage 'waves' of migrants, which were only putting thousands of people in danger.

"Western Europe used to be the most secure and safest region globally," he said in his address to the General Assembly's annual general debate. Indeed, he said that only a few years ago, events in the Middle East would not have happened in Europe.

But the current fear of terrorist attacks was now a part of daily life –as beaches, concert halls and shopping malls have become "venues of execution" – a direct consequence of the massive influx of illegal migrants over the last two and half years.

Some 1.5 million illegal migrants had entered the European Union without any control, Mr. Szijjártó continued, which had given terrorist organizations the chance to send their fighters to the European continent. "We have to admit that social integration procedures in Western Europe failed. Some integration processes of former migrants have been unsuccessful, and in many places, parallel societies have been constructed."

"It is shocking that after the barbaric terrorist attacks in Europe and massive violations of nation and international law, and after thousands have lost their lives on the Mediterranean Sea and elsewhere," there are still leaders of international organizations and representatives of large countries who emphasized that migration was favourable and to be encouraged.

That was "extremely unacceptable and irresponsible behaviour," he said. Encouraging migratory waves, knowing that terrorist organizations will take advantage' had only placed thousands of people into danger. All States had a fundamental right to guarantee security for their people and to protect their borders.

He went on to recall that Hungary was a Christian country that was obliged to help people in need. The rights of people must be restored where they had been violated, he said, and people must be helped to return home as soon as possible. The solution to the migration crisis was in tackling the causes of conflict and stopping terrorist organizations.