

Delivering for countries most vulnerable to climate change

Thank you for that Lord Ahmad, my dear friend, as you said we have known each other as family friends for a very long time. So, I am very pleased we are doing this event together.

Your excellencies, friends,

Greetings from Costa Rica. I arrived here yesterday as part of my international engagement programme on COP26 and of course it was very important that I continued with this commitment, so it is a real pleasure to join you today.

And I very much look forward to visiting the Caribbean in person as soon as possible.

But friends, what we do know is that in less than eight months from now, we will welcome world leaders to Glasgow for COP26.

And we are absolutely determined, I am determined, that this will be a summit, and a presidency, that delivers for those countries most vulnerable to climate change.

Countries like the Caribbean states.

And we know that the stakes could not be higher.

As The Hon Gaston Alfonso Browne has said, at the time of the CAS in December which we co-hosted, he talked about the fact that this was an issue that I quote, he said; "points a dagger at the heart" of the existence of many in the region.

And his stark message is just one example amongst many of Caribbean leaders communicating the real urgency, the moral urgency of our predicament, with devastating clarity.

And what I want us to do is to elevate that message.

To amplify your climate leadership.

And to work with you, in partnership, to drive a real action of change on the issues that you tell us matter the most.

Now, I have heard, you know, that you have talked about the: "1.5 to stay alive".

And it is about pushing all governments for ambitious emissions reductions, that keep that goal within reach, and it is an absolute priority for the UK's COP Presidency.

The message that I am taking around the world.

We have all seen in the last couple of weeks, the UN's NDC synthesis report that just shows how much further we need to go in terms of this target on NDCs.

So, this must be a call to action. To which we must respond with urgency.

With ambitious 2030 Nationally Determined Contributions.

Net zero commitments, supported of course, really importantly by long-term strategies as well.

And policies, like phasing out coal, to turn targets into reality.

Here, I am very pleased to say that the Caribbean is leading the way.

And the UK is proud to partner with you as you do so:

We co-chair the NDC Partnership with our friends in Jamaica, and co-hosted the CARICOM Moment of Ambition Summit last year.

We know Suriname is already carbon neutral. Barbados aims to be within a decade.

And Cuba, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Suriname, and Dominican Republic have already come forward with new enhanced NDCs.

It is something that others need to do and I am urging others to follow your lead.

And I ask that all of you work with us to encourage those big global emitters to act.

Please continue to use your unique relationships and your moral leadership, to challenge us all to step up. And drive down emissions.

We all know this is a vital issue.

Yet, we also know that even if we were to reach net zero tomorrow, the effects of climate change would endure.

Climate impacts are now, unfortunately, an inevitability, for which we must prepare.

And of course, your region knows that all too well. As the hurricane seasons grow steadily in force and ferocity, year after year.

Shortly after I became the UK's International Development Secretary back in 2019, Hurricane Dorian struck.

And we all know, that first responders arriving at the scene, described it as apocalyptic.

And the reports and images that emerged were absolutely terrible to witness. The suffering and destruction that took place.

And this I can tell you has very much influenced my commitment to putting adaptation at the centre of the UK's COP26 Presidency.

So, we are urging all countries to come forward with adaptation communications. Including, of course, Caribbean nations.

And we are working with donors, development banks, and private investors, to increase the support available for adaptation.

And of course, we are focussed on practical ways to reduce climate risk.

On Tuesday this week, I co-chaired the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure with Dr Mishra, of the Government of India.

And colleagues will know that the CDRI helps members to adapt the planning and design of their infrastructure, to the demands of our changing climate.

And colleagues will also know that earlier this year, the UK proudly launched the Adaptation Action Coalition, with Saint Lucia, and others, which I have been urging all nations to join.

And this builds on the Call to Action that I and other friends launched back in 2019 at the UN General Assembly.

And brings countries together to work on adaptation solutions – from the local to of course the global.

Such work is absolutely vital. But it is not fool proof.

So we must respond to the call made at COP25 to avert, minimise and address loss and damage.

By, for example, working with Chile to agree the structure and form of the Santiago Network.

And by encouraging early action as well.

Working with the Risk Informed Early Action Partnership, of which Saint Lucia, Jamaica and Belize are partners.

To urge vulnerable countries to join, and donor countries to pledge funding.

We also know, because you have told us, clearly and repeatedly, that accessible, affordable finance is an urgent priority.

And we absolutely recognise the enormous economic blow that Covid-19 has inflicted on the region. And the debt pressures you are experiencing as a result.

And I have to tell you, I am being very clear with fellow donor countries that honouring our commitment to raise \$100billion a year with increased

international climate finance, is it is absolutely essential.

It is a moral duty. It is a moral imperative.

And of course we are now going to have to have a deliberation on a new, collective goals, post 2025, and these will begin at COP26.

We are also implementing the G20 Debt Service Suspension. And looking to find sustainable, long-term solutions to debt vulnerabilities.

And as part of this, we are working with the G7, G20, the Paris Club, the IMF, and the World Bank and other financial institutions to address issues a country-by-country basis.

And we are partnering with countries most vulnerable to climate change, and donors, to look for those longer term solutions to debt and other finance issues.

Later this year, the UK Government will hold the second of the SIDS Access to Finance Roundtables.

And at the end of this month, our COP26 Presidency is holding a Climate and Development Ministerial meeting.

Bringing together Ministers, multilateral and regional development banks, and the UN.

To look at four vital issues:

Access to finance; quality, quantity and composition of climate finance itself; the response to impacts; and fiscal space and debt.

And we very much look forward to having strong representation from across the Caribbean at this meeting.

And so of course, planning together how we can make progress in each of these areas, through events such as the G7, the UN, the Spring Meetings of the IFI's, and COP26 itself.

Friends I have to say that at the Climate Ambition Summit last year, the Hon Andrew Holness made a really important intervention and he quoted Usain Bolt, saying: "The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in determination."

And he invited us, I quote to "make COP26 the turning point to what we know is possible."

So, working in partnership, I do believe we can achieve this.

Securing that negotiated outcome at Glasgow that releases the full potential of the Paris Agreement.

Driving real action on mitigation, adaptation and finance.

And delivering for countries most vulnerable to climate change.

And at the end of the day, creating that brighter future for us all which is absolutely vital for us and for future generations.

Thank you.