



Office of
the Prime Minister

REMARKS BY
PRIME MINISTER DAVIS, QC, MP
TO THE
ONE YOUNG WORLD CAUCUS
17th FEBRUARY, 2022

Good morning everyone.

I am so delighted to be able to join you, and to welcome you to this Caucus.

When I addressed the 'One Young World Ambassadors' back in October last year, just before COP26 in Glasgow, I focused on the environmental and economic damage being inflicted by the adverse effects of climate change - on the world at large, and on The Bahamas in particular.

And I implored you to join me in spreading the word about the urgent need for global climate action.

After COP26, one thing is clear in my mind.

The word has been spread.

The world knows.

Leaders know.

One by one, we stood on that COP26 stage, and recited a litany of the damage and risks associated with the adverse impact of climate change.

In my own contribution, I emphatically made the point about the particular vulnerabilities of low-lying, Small Island Developing States such as ours.

And I made sure that it wasn't just what I believe younger generations refer to as a 'Pity Party'.

I urged my colleagues to act and to act now, to help us to help ourselves with the financial support and technology transfers which would enable us to rebuild our country to be resilient against the onslaught of climate change.

The Leaders know.

The world knows.

It is the action which must now follow which leaves much to be desired.

I hear the frustration of many young people about the lack of action.

I hear your fears and anxieties about your future, and the kind of world you will inherit.

I understand that amidst this existential threat and the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic greater sacrifices are demanded from you.

I urge you not to despair.

Even though the world seems to remain stubbornly-addicted to a way of life that produces carbon emissions, there are signs that the largest-polluting countries and the highest-polluting industries, are hearing the message.

Steps taken so far are not nearly enough - and certainly not fast enough.

And we must not be fooled by attempts to 'green-wash' and confuse the debate.

But we mustn't give up.

All our lives depend on it.

Two particular features of this 'One World Caucus' give me great cause for optimism and hope.

The first is your commitment to internationalism.

Even while there are worrying signs that some nations are being tempted into isolationism and nationalism, your organisation's continuing commitment to international partnership and international action, is a real cause for optimism.

It may seem normal to you that you come together in this way.

But be aware that even now, as old geo-political conflicts flare up, and new ones emerge, there will only be justice and peace in this world if we find meaningful ways to come together and to work together.

My second cause for optimism lies in your potential for serious, consequential activism.

But even as you take on the great issues of our time, remember that no activist cause worth fighting for, was won overnight.

Just because the present reality seems so stacked against it, doesn't mean that success, however defined, is not possible.

In the early 20th century, many women in Western democracies thought they would never be enfranchised to vote.

Some even died protesting.

But now it is a 21st century norm.

In the 1960s, it was the activism of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and small armies of black and white people in the United States, that helped to force changes in the laws of segregation.

And it was the mass activism of ordinary people, led by Mahatma Gandhi in India, and of Nelson Mandela in South Africa, that helped to defeat systems of colonialism and race that at the time seemed hopeless.

The ongoing battles of various ethnic minorities for their security, of other groups of people for economic justice, for gender equality, for the ability to live your own truth and be who you are – whoever you are - these are not yet fully won.

But the activist efforts behind them continue to yield positive results, however small.

I offer these examples to you by way of inspiration.

Don't give up.

Keep on keeping on.

And in not giving up, keep pushing the battle forward.

Through your continued activist efforts, many of those who once denied the reality of the negative impacts of climate change, have fallen silent.

This is partly due to the evidence of two-storey waves of devastating Category 5 hurricanes, the terrifying tornadoes, the furnaces of wildfires which have spread across many continents, and the floods and the landslides which threaten so many communities.

But it is also because young people like you, have made it clear that they want more than irresponsible debate.

Don't give up.

Keep on keeping on.

Here in The Bahamas, we are making our own effort.

Yesterday, I was proud to tell parliament about this Dialogue today.

It was in the context of my reporting on the achievements of COP26 by The Bahamas, and the actions since taken by my government.

In my Communication, I devoted an entire section to 'Youth Empowerment and Capacity-Building'.

Let me briefly set out some of the key announcements which I made.

I advised my fellow parliamentarians that this engagement today is the first of several initiatives by my Administration, to connect, collaborate and strategize with young people on matters relating to climate change.

I also formally announced that my government has agreed to host a 'Youth Climate Conference' at the University of The Bahamas later this year, from July 6th – 8th.

I am happy to report that they were excited to hear that young people from around the world will be invited to engage with Bahamians from 15-30yrs old, to debate and discuss issues relating to climate change mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, and climate justice.

Hopefully many of you already know that we are an archipelago of some 700 islands.

Of these, there are 16 main islands which are inhabited, which we call the Family Islands. To demonstrate the scale of our commitment to the Conference, we promised to ensure that at least two students from each of our Family Islands are able to participate in the 'Youth Climate Conference'.

Yesterday, I also informed parliament that we have appointed two 'Climate Youth Ambassadors' to help us to engage and empower young people on the world stage. This was also extremely well-received.

And finally, as we prepare for The Bahamas to be well-represented at COP27 in Egypt, I announced that my government is committed to ensuring that at least eight Youth Representatives will form part of the delegation from The Bahamas.

We hope to stimulate as much interest as possible by young Bahamians, and hope that all young people interested in climate change will put themselves forward to be considered in this competitive selection process.

These measures are only the beginning.

We are already closely considering much bigger, much more tangible measures that will allow The Bahamas to play a bigger role in helping to secure all our tomorrows.

I concluded my parliamentary Communication by pointing out to my fellow lawmakers, that "at no time in our history have the Bahamian people been so actively involved and aware of what is happening on the international stage in respect of climate change.

And at no time has the presence of our people been so necessary.

We are one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change.

To do nothing, to say nothing, not to show up, not to raise our hands and voices and be counted: for my government, this is simply not an option."

This is also my charge to this Caucus.

Continue to do all you can.

Continue to show up.

Continue to speak up.

Continue to raise your hands and voices.

Continue to be counted.

This is nothing less than the battle of our lives.

We have to win!

I thank you.

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