



Office of
the Prime Minister

INTERVENTION BY
PRIME MINISTER PHILIP DAVIS, QC, MP
AT THE CARICOM-SICA SUMMIT
CONCERNING
CLIMATE CHANGE
3RD MARCH 2022

Good Morning Colleagues –

I want to begin first of all by thanking the Government of Belize for availing ourselves of this opportunity to be at this critical forum.

We have been treated royally, and we are pleased to be in your beautiful country. We have just ended two days of full discussions important meeting with court friends from SICA.

I want to add my words of welcome to the SICA delegations. Thank you for joining us.

I wish to say that this provides a rare opportunity for a Bahamian Prime Minister to meet and greet people from our hemisphere and region that we would not normally meet.

As a new Prime Minister, I come to the table with no agenda other than the hand of friendship, cooperation and peace in our region and hemisphere. Talking to me is essential to understanding, and it is crucial there that this forum exists and continues to exist.

I have appointed an ambassador to the countries of the SICA, and he is here with me today. It is a sign of my country's commitment to engagement in the region at a level that has heretofore not existed. I have asked His Excellency Sebas Bastian to be vigorous in his engagement with the region and use his business acumen and skills in outreach for the mutual benefit of our countries and our peoples. I know he will do well.

I look forward to the formal agreement and working with your respective countries to develop and grow.

Today I have chosen to speak about climate change. That is front and centre of my international agenda because it is existential for The Bahamas.

The latest report by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released on Monday included several stark warnings, one of which had the observation

that “the impacts of climate change on vulnerable low-lying and coastal areas present serious threats to the ability of the land to support human life and livelihoods”.

Friends, they’re talking about us.

The adverse impacts of climate change are hitting the planet harder and faster than previously thought.

More than 270 researchers from 67 countries authored this report.

They know.

And we know.

We are well past the stage of having to win the argument.

All those 'tomorrows' from years past are now upon us.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the report was "an atlas of human suffering and damning indictment of failed climate leadership".

We can and must continue to call on polluters to reduce their carbon emissions and live up

to the many years of unfulfilled promises to help the vulnerable.

For the first time, the Report broadened the scope of that moral debt to include “historical and ongoing patterns of inequity such as colonialism” that continue to contribute to the vulnerability in many regions to climate change.

These are more than just areas of economic opportunity.

They are mechanisms for survival.

“The impacts of climate change on vulnerable low-lying and coastal areas present serious threats to the ability of the land to support human life and livelihoods”.

As a regional community, what can we do, beyond hoping that our friends will spring into action, beyond waiting for the inevitable to hit us?

What leadership can we provide?

Colleagues:

As we are not the major carbon emitters or the wealthy carbon-emitting beneficiaries, there will always be limitations around what we can do.

However, the Bahamas believe that it is possible to be an active and driving part of the solution.

The first step is to take the first step.

We recognise that we face a global phenomenon brought on by global causes and need an international effort.

Yet when it comes to the region, we are still acting individually.

I do not underestimate the challenges of stepping up our levels of regional cooperation, but leadership requires us to try, try and try again.

My government still has some way to go in arguing to the Bahamian people that we must look south and north.

We are grateful to our friends and allies for all that they do.

But the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic brought into sharp and humbling focus that our self-interest may well be more fully-aligned with those who live like us: Small Island Developing States; small economies with narrow economic bases; and small populations whose voices already resound loudly on the world stage, but not loudly enough to carry the argument.

Colleagues, we are experiencing the same hurricanes, the same rising sea levels, the same threats to our tourism industries.

We intend to push an agenda that includes a strong focus on solutions hoping that our common interests will help us narrow our ties and strengthen our bonds.

We are already exploring several paths forward which we believe offer opportunities for regional and international co-operation.

If we can come together to address the biggest, most existential threat facing

humanity, then surely we can overcome some of the other obstacles which have historically prevented the region from working together more closely and more productively.

This is a tomorrow worth fighting for.

Thank you.

END

