

UNGA 72ND SESSION STATEMENT.

Secretary General to the United Nations- H.E. Antonio Guterres,
President of the General Assembly- H.E. Miroslav Lajcak
Distinguished Heads of Delegations,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Mr. President;

I come to you straight from the front line of the war on climate change.

With physical and emotional difficulty/ I have left my bleeding nation/ to be with you here today/ because these are the moments for which the United Nations exists!

It is why we/ collectively/ have always respected/ and hold dear/ the values of this institution!

We congratulate you/ Mr. President/ on your appointment/ and wish you well/ in upholding the ideals of humanity's/ greatest invention!

And in keeping with this institution's regard for fraternity/ we take this opportunity to express our condolences to our brothers and sisters in Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Cuba, St. Maarten, St. Thomas, the British Virgin Islands, the Turks and Caicos islands, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic/ and also to those who have suffered losses in our host country, the United States - in Texas and Florida.

And to our brothers and sisters in Mexico/ we stand in prayerful solidarity/ after the catastrophic earthquake this past week.

Mr. President/ warmer air and sea temperatures have permanently altered the climate/ between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn.

Heat is the fuel that takes ordinary storms - storms we could normally master in our sleep - and supercharges them into a devastating force.

In the past/ we would prepare for one heavy storm a year.

Now, thousands of storms/ form on a breeze in the mid-Atlantic/ and line up to pound us/ with maximum force and fury.

Before this century/ no other generation had seen more than one category 5 hurricane in their lifetime.

In this century, this has happened twice...and notably/ it has happened in the space of just two weeks.

And may I add/ Mr. President, that we are only mid-way into this year's hurricane season.

In the case of Dominica, it has been only 2 years since we lost lives/ and endured substantial physical and infrastructural damage/ from the ravages of the floods and mud slides of Tropical Storm Erika.

Mr. President/ to deny climate change/ is to procrastinate while the earth sinks; it is to deny a truth we have just lived!

It is to mock thousands of my compatriots/ who in a few hours/ without a roof over their heads/ will watch the night descend on Dominica/ in fear of sudden mud slides...and what the next hurricane may bring.

We/ as a country/ and as a region/ did not start this war against nature! We did not provoke it! The war/ has come/ to us!!

Mr. President/ my fellow leaders/ there is no more time for conversation! There is little time left for action.

While the big countries talk, the small island nations suffer. We need action....and we need it NOW!!

We in the Caribbean do not produce greenhouse gases or sulphate aerosols. We do not pollute or overfish our oceans. We have made no contribution to global warming/ that can move the needle.

But yet, we are among the main victims...on the frontline!

In the Commonwealth of Dominica, we have long pursued and respected an existence that preserves our Little Eden.

The Morne Trois Pitons has been a national park for 40 years and a UNESCO World Heritage Site for 20. Our livelihoods are part of our ecosystem. This is how my people and my country earn and survive!

But what is our reality at this moment?

Pure Devastation!!...as Dominicans bear the brunt of climate change.

I repeat - we are shouldering the consequences/ of the actions of others! Actions that endanger our very existence...and all/ for the enrichment/ of a few elsewhere.

Mr. President,

We dug graves today in Dominica!

We buried loved ones yesterday and I am sure that as I return home tomorrow, we shall discover additional fatalities, as a consequence of this encounter.

Our homes are flattened!

Our buildings roofless!

Our water pipes smashed...and road infrastructure destroyed!

Our hospital is without power!...and schools have disappeared beneath the rubble.

Our crops are uprooted.

Where there was green/ there is now only dust/ and dirt!

The desolation is beyond imagination.

Mr. President, fellow leaders - The stars have fallen.....!

Eden is broken!!

The nation of Dominica has come here/ to declare an international/ humanitarian/ emergency. One that is centred in Dominica/ but also encompasses many of our neighbours/ including our sister isle, Antigua/ which had to evacuate its citizens from Barbuda.

Dominicans, Mr. President, have been responsible members of the global community. We have co-joined all of the major international

battles; from the abolition of forced labour to the protection of patents.

Yet, today, 72,000 Dominicans lie on the front line/ in a war they did not choose....with extensive casualties/ from a war/ that they did not start!

The time has come for the international community to make a stand/ and to decide; whether it will be shoulder to shoulder with those suffering the ravages of climate change worldwide; Whether we can mitigate the consequences of unprecedented increases in sea temperatures and levels; whether to help us rebuild sustainable livelihoods; or whether the international community will merely show some pity now, and then flee....; relieved to know that this time it was not you.

Today, Mr. President, we/ the small nations of the world/ need to know who our real friends are! Who have our backs!!

Not all countries are sitting as inactive bystanders. Some of our traditional friends are playing their part.

The United Arab Emirates/ for example/ have risen to the challenge.

We commend Sheik Mohamed Al Maktoom of UAE/ for his announcement/ in this year of Zayed/ to boost the theme of giving - by “delivering even more goodness to all parts of the world”.

Today, we invite nations of similar might/ to follow the lead of The United Arab Emirates!

Mr. President/ the success of the COP21 in Paris/ is a demonstration of the collective political will of Member States to take action/ to combat climate change.

One year on, the call for urgent action is even greater/ if we are to curtail the impact of climate change on us/ and future generations.

We need all of humanity/ all countries - big and small; developed and developing/ to come together/ to save our planet! We must all live up to our obligations/ and commitments/ to do more!

Inaction, and even inadequate action, destroys lives.

The Green Climate Fund/ that was created to assist/ in putting mitigation measures in place/ and to assist the victims of climate change/ is commendable. But much more must be done to assist

countries that continue to bear the brunt of the impact of climate change.

The World Bank established the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility to assist countries that have been impacted by natural disasters.

Though helpful/ the amounts are usually grossly inadequate/ to rebuild infrastructure/ and to maintain the gains and progress made in economic and social development/ after the likes of Hurricanes Maria and Irma/ or even in the case of a Tropical Storm like Erika/ that occurred two years ago.

Substantially more funds must therefore be made available to vulnerable countries/ for loss and damage/ such that they may mitigate the risks associated with future incidents.

The World Bank facility must be re-capitalized for greater coverage/ by using already committed funds from the Green Climate Fund.

This would allow our countries to focus on improving the lives of our people and support the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It would allow us to rebuild our nation/ not as it was/ but in a manner that is far more capable/ to meet the realities of rising sea levels/ and warmer oceans.

Not to do so/ Mr. President, would be to abandon those who have paid a steep price/ for what others/ elsewhere/ have created.

It would be to let 72,000 Dominicans shoulder the world's conscience on climate change/ on their own.

Today, we ask you not to express your sympathies this week...but then hope our eyes do not meet next week.

Let these extraordinary events, elicit extraordinary efforts, to rebuild nations/ sustainably.

Let these extraordinary events/ unleash the innovation and creativity of global citizens/ to spark a new paradigm of green economic development/ that stabilizes/ and reverses/ the consequences of human-induced/ global warming.

Let it spark a thousand points of light...not shame.

Let us take serious action against the realities of climate change..

And I promise you, Mr. President, that Dominicans and other Caribbean citizens/ will play our part.

We are in shock, but/ we are not stooped!

We cry; but do not despair!

We will rise! ...Because Dominican people are strong. Because Caribbean people are resilient!

We will rebuild our Garden of Eden again ...for our children and for future generations.

Mr. President, as a result of Tropical Storm Erika in 2015, we committed to creating a National Vulnerability Risk and Resilience Fund/ to improve the ability of our Government to respond to the impact of natural disasters.

That facility has not yet been capitalized.

We intended to place funds/ from our own treasury/ on an annual basis. But, our capacity to earn has now been significantly compromised/ even before we have gotten it off the ground.

Today we need all the things required in a natural disaster/ that has affected an entire nation.

We need water, food and emergency shelter.

We need roads, bridges and new infrastructure.

But we also need capabilities of delivery....

I call upon those with substantial military capacities/ to lend us the rescue and rebuilding equipment/ that may be standing idle waiting for a war; Let Dominica today be that war.because currently, our landscape reflects/ a zone of war.

The battle we face has brought us to our knees.

We need resources/ NOW!...so that we may move/ with purpose/ to the task of rebuilding our beautiful island home.

We will need to rebuild homes and villages. We will need to rebuild communities, schools, roads and bridges. We will need to rebuild a country...and we cannot do it alone.

Above all else, Mr. President and members of this August body, we need you! We need your humanity!and we need you now/ to act/ truly/ as **OUR/ United Nations!!**

I thank you!