

Draft Address of Prime Minister Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit at COP 21 Paris

Salutations

Mr. President,

On behalf of the government and people of the Commonwealth of Dominica, and on my own behalf, [in my capacity as Chair of the 32-member Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Sustainable Energy and Climate Resilience Organisation - SIDS DOCK -] please accept our condolences on the horrific brutality that descended on France on November 13, when terror struck, taking the lives of 130 people and wounding numerous others.

Mr. President, as the world descends on France for these climate talks, our message to our determined hosts – the government and people of France – is, we, the leaders of the world are here, we are here with you and for you, and we say in one global voice, vive la France! For make no mistake, terrorism and climate change are two of the greatest threats confronting humanity, and the Commonwealth of Dominica shares the agony and pain of that fateful day, and stands in solidarity with the French Republic in combating the horror of terrorism.

The Commonwealth of Dominica, a 760 square kilometre small island developing state in the Caribbean with over 72,000 people, can be counted among those states that experienced the devastating effects of climate change in 2015. The Commonwealth of Dominica humbly and gratefully stands before this auspicious audience in acknowledging the heartfelt support received as a result of the devastating effects of Tropical Storm Erika in August 2015. This single event represents the grave and deadly impacts of climate change and its overwhelming power to derail development, and what can be done and has been done to recover and make our country more resilient.

The human devastation was heart-breaking and overwhelming. Eleven (11) people were confirmed dead, twenty two (22) missing, five hundred and seventy-four (574) homeless, and seven hundred and thirteen (713) evacuated. Approximately seven thousand two hundred and twenty-nine (7,229) were impacted by the event in disaster declared areas.

On August 27, Erika passed over island unleashing extraordinary rainfall estimated at as much as 17 inches in the mountainous interior over a nine-hour period. Owing to the location of the island within the North Atlantic Hurricane Belt, its vulnerability, exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity, the heavy rainfall resulted in intense and rapid flooding and land slippages.

Consequently, the island suffered severe infrastructural damage, primarily related to transportation, housing and agriculture. Based upon an initial assessment of impacts to each affected sector, the resulting total damage and loss was 483 million United States dollars or \$ 1.3 billion dollars in the local currency. This is equivalent to 90 per cent of Dominica's Gross Domestic Product

(GDP). So severe was the damage that two communities had to be evacuated on a permanent basis and one community remains isolated from the rest of the country due to the destruction of a crossing over a 300-foot gorge on one side, and numerous landslides on the other; the area remains unstable.

With the generous assistance of friendly states and supportive international organisations, our recovery has been ongoing and we have pledged to rebuild our country and to do so in a more deliberate, integrated and resilient manner and applying the latest technologies available.

In pursuit of this objective, the Commonwealth of Dominica is pressing for the establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund. We commenced the process of mobilising resources for this Fund by convening a donors meeting in Dominica, two weeks ago. We are deeply encouraged by the pledges made and are hopeful that the conclusions of COP 21 will build on these. Mr. President, the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund for SIDS could represent **a final resolution** at COP 21.

The effects of climate change are jeopardising the existence of many small low lying island developing states, and destroying lives, livelihoods and economies of others, is emerging as a permanent reality. It's not just rising temperatures that will devastate life, but rising sea levels too.

The projection is for a 1-2 metre rise in sea levels by the end of the 21st century. This would mean approximately 13 hundred square kilometres of land area being lost in the Caribbean – that is equal to the land area of Barbados, Antigua & Barbuda, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Anguilla combined. A rise in sea levels is projected to displace 110,000 people; damage 149 tourist resorts; five power plants; 21 CARICOM airports; and inundate lands surrounding 35 Caribbean ports; among other consequences.

Mr. President, like previous UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP) meetings, many have come here with the hope of “**a final resolution.**” But for small islands, it was at the COP 15 in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2009, that our leaders formally recognised that we had crossed the “red line,” of 1.5 degrees Celsius and concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere of 350 parts per million (ppm), and that there was no turning back, and that we would have to take control of our own destiny and find creative and innovative ways to help adapt to the impacts of climate change – and so, Mr. President, we formed our own organisation – SIDS DOCK - to do that, and in doing so, that was a giant step for small islands toward **a final resolution.**

The Commonwealth of Dominica firmly believes that the time for pointing fingers and playing the blame game on the causes of climate change has passed. Small islands have forged new and genuine partnerships that are leading the way by example, in moving away from *business as usual*. In climate change, our world faces a challenge that is potentially damaging to all of humanity and collectively, it is our duty and responsibility to bring all the resources at our disposal to address the problems.

In this regard, we are grateful and appreciative of the support from our friends from Denmark, Japan, Austria, Italy, Norway and Sweden for their strong and early support in helping us to establish and develop SIDS DOCK.

The Commonwealth of Dominica is cognisant that the technology exists to help solve the climate change dilemma. Small island leaders have demonstrated bold and decisive leadership that has convinced key parties and stakeholders that it is in our best long-term interest to create low-carbon economies, benefit from less pollution, and thereby create a new economic sector that reduces poverty and increases employment.

SIDS, while small in size have, are custodians of the vast ocean, where huge quantities of carbon dioxide are sequestered annually, significantly more than the amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) we emit. We, therefore, have a responsibility to make best efforts to help better manage our ocean resources to maximize GHG sequestration and food security. That is why we call upon our partners and the international community to strongly support the accelerated deployment of potentially game-changing technologies that tap vast resources of renewable energy, such as the ocean.

Dominica is a small place with big ambitions. We have adopted and are currently implementing a proactive stance in reducing carbon emissions as close to zero as possible. Our energy policy seeks to make us less dependent on fossil fuels and more so on renewables. Currently, 30 per cent of our energy generation is from hydro and incentives are in place for encouraging the use of renewables. We have made significant investments in developing the geothermal potential on our island and expect in the short-term, to have a geothermal plant built.

Due to the repeated onslaught of climate change, our respective governments and our kind and generous partners and donors have, year after year, invested in recovery and rebuilding efforts in small islands and vulnerable countries. Now more than ever, we need an international mechanism to insure vulnerable communities against loss and damage when mitigation and adaptation efforts fail. This is not something new being put forward. The issue of insurance is embedded within the UNFCCC and has been an important element of the negotiations for small islands since the 1990s.

Mr. President, it is in this light that the Government and People of the Commonwealth of Dominica re-emphasises the need and urgently call upon our developed country partners to increase the provision of finance, transfer and deployment of technology and capacity building efforts in a more predictable manner that reflects strong public-private partnerships. Enhanced action and international cooperation on adaptation is urgently required to enable and support the implementation of adaptation actions aimed at reducing vulnerability and building resilience in small islands and other vulnerable countries. The establishment of a Loss and Damage Fund can and should be **a final resolution** of the COP 21.

The Commonwealth of Dominica is ready to fully engage with all Parties with the view of finalizing a successful agreement here in Paris.