

Statement by
The Rt. Hon. Perry G. Christie
Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
Commonwealth of The Bahamas
At the
21ST CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO
THE UNITED NATION CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (COP21)
30 November – 11 December 2015 Paris, France

Mr. President,

I wish to avail myself of the opportunity to express again on behalf of the people of The Bahamas our sincere condolences to the French nation and the families of the victims of the recent atrocities committed in this beautiful city. We hope that our presence here today gives some measure of support and comfort as France fights this scourge of extremism and radicalization.

Mr. President,

The Bahamas is now more vulnerable to climate change than in the history of our country. Already, with the global rise in temperature of less than one degree, we are experiencing more intense storms and flooding, most recently Hurricane Joaquin caused an estimated 100 million dollars in damage, 10 per cent of our national budget, to the central and southern Bahamas in October. This storm went from tropical storm to near category five hurricane in 39 hours. The Bahamas and other Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are seeing unprecedented droughts, extreme weather events, accelerating sea-level rise and other life-threatening impacts, and the science tells us that we can expect only more intense impacts over time.

Indeed, with 80% of our land within one metre or five feet of mean sea level, “business as usual” threatens the very existence of The Bahamas, as we know it.

Mr. President,

Recognizing that mitigation alone will not protect us, we have made concerted efforts to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. We have strengthened building codes; built new coastal defences; and moved to relocate vulnerable communities – all through use of our national resources.

We have also outlined the actions that The Bahamas will take in its efforts to assume responsibility for the country's global greenhouse gas emissions. Among them is the development of indigenous renewable energy resources with the goal of increasing the percentage of renewables in the energy mix to a minimum of 30% by 2030.

We believe that these actions will minimize our already nominal contribution to emissions, and we hope to convert these contributions to **legally binding commitments that will be captured in an Annex to the Paris Agreement.**

Mr. President,

It is important to note however that The Bahamas is facing growing public and international pressure to adapt to the impacts of climate change, while at the same time we are expected to pursue a low carbon pathway and increase energy security – all very noble yet expensive and resource-intensive pursuits.

We must adopt, at the end of next week, an **international legally binding agreement under the Convention that is in the form of a protocol and is applicable to all Parties.**

We must also agree a long term goal of keeping the average global temperature rise below **1.5 degrees.** The 2 degrees goal which many espouse will lead to the loss of entire countries, Mr. President. And a 1.5 degree goal is not only desirable, it is achievable and feasible. Let us then send a clear message to the world that we will fight for countries like The Bahamas to stay on the map into the next century.

This existential threat to the survival of a number of **Small Island Developing States (SIDS) must be explicitly recognised in the Paris Agreement.** It should, at its core, acknowledge and make provisions for the special circumstances of SIDS, allowing for the flexibility needed to overcome limited human, financial and technical capacities.

Mr. President,

The Bahamas sees the following as indispensable coming out of Paris. **Loss and Damage** must be anchored in the Paris Agreement. It is not possible to discuss even 2 degrees, when there is no acceptable process in place to address the inevitable loss and damage that would result from adopting such a goal and the recent experience of

The Bahamas with Hurricane Joaquin shows that existing insurance structures are inadequate and often rely on legalisms which deny legitimate claims.

Secondly, we must recognise the **100 billion per year pledge** by developed countries, needs to be **honoured and built upon in the post-2020 period**.

The Bahamas should be able to access these funds. We deplore the continued use of Gross Domestic Product/Gross National Income per capita as the main component in determining the access that The Bahamas and other SIDS have to financial resources for our adaptation needs. Storms like Joaquin and others have shown that it only takes one event to decimate entire island economies and communities.

Mr. President,

I know the next two weeks will not be easy. Our negotiators must find the compromises we need to move forward. Because this is what we must leave as our legacy – the ability to rise above great difficulty to become something greater!

Thank you, Mr. President.