

Statement delivered by
The Honourable Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis
Dr. Timothy Harris
A Call to Action
COP 21
Paris, November-December 2016

Presidents, colleague Prime Ministers, Excellencies, Delegates, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I begin, allow me to reflect and say that the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis was shocked and dismayed to witness the Paris attacks of November 13th live across our television screens. In this regard, on behalf of the Government and people of the Federation, allow me to pause and offer condolences to the families and friends that have been scarred by the attacks that mercilessly claimed over 100 innocent lives. The Federation stands in solidarity with the Government and people of France against terror.

The delegation of St. Kitts and Nevis joins you here in Paris after participating in the 24th biannual Meeting of the Commonwealth in Malta. There, Heads of Government, recognizing the importance of the issue of climate change and the significance of its impact on small island states discussed this topic. They agreed on the seriousness and urgency of the threat posed by climate change and the need for an ambitious agreement here in Paris.

Mr. President, my delegation calls on all Parties here to negotiate and agree a legally-binding agreement with ambitious emission reduction targets. St. Kitts and Nevis recommends that all parties subscribe to at least 5-year commitment cycles with robust ex-ante review and ex-poste assessment processes. We also hope that developed country Parties and other Parties in a position to do so, would be encouraged to provide support to vulnerable countries, particularly to Small Island Developing States.

St. Kitts and Nevis, like other Small Island Developing States, has been undergoing many climate related changes; namely sea level rise, extreme weather events, prolonged and severe droughts, and disruption to our reefs, coastlines and agriculture.

Ladies and gentlemen, the dangers of Climate Change are real and present. The threat is existential. Mr. President, greenhouse gas emissions from small island states like St. Kitts and Nevis are negligible. Yet our small island states continue to be adversely and disproportionately affected by the impacts of Climate Change. Nonetheless, as responsible global citizens, we in St. Kitts and Nevis are already acting locally to reduce our national carbon footprint even further. The pursuit of renewable energy solutions is now a critical and integral component of our national sustainable development strategy to transform St. Kitts and Nevis into a fully environmentally sustainable small island state.

Already, my Government is incentivizing behavioral changes through the facilitation of duty free concessions on renewable energy technologies. We are building strategic partnerships with countries and the private sector to develop geothermal, solar and wind energy solutions. Currently, we have solar farms operating on both St. Kitts and Nevis and are also exploring the potential geothermal capacity on the islands. These renewables will have a significant impact on our energy consumption patterns and reliance on fossil fuels.

Much of this would not be possible without our development partner: The Republic of China (Taiwan). The Federation welcomes the completion of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions by the Republic of China on (Taiwan) which is laudable as they are not party to the Convention. Taiwan has not only assisted our Federation, which is on the other side of the globe, but at home critical work is being done to contribute to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions. They should be considered, at the least, to become an observer to the Convention.

Allow me to share that this year St. Kitts and Nevis experienced its worst drought in generations. Our aquifers, which provide potable water for our urban population, were exposed to the risk of salt water intrusion. Although the risk has subsided, it is not over. The Federation has had to ration water for the last several months, a condition which is projected to continue well into 2016. Additionally, earlier in the year, we witnessed the devastation of a single tropical storm on my sister island of Dominica, whose development has been set back decades in infrastructure, socio-economic and financial terms.

I reiterate, Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen that Climate Change is real for our Small Island Developing States. I fear that it will get progressively worse if we do not act now! Mr. President, climate change is not an insurmountable challenge. But it requires commitment. It needs political will and ambitious global action.

We must develop targets. Many of our small and vulnerable states require targeted technical assistance for the implementation of robust mitigation and adaptation strategies. We must also focus on the issue of loss and damage, financing, technology transfer and capacity building.

Fellow leaders, as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development takes hold, let us ensure that addressing Climate Change remains a priority. And let us act with the dispatch and sense of recognition that we are working in defense of the entire planet and for the future of our children.

I thank you.