

Ste Lucie



"A HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY"

Intervention

By

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**Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Economic
Affairs, Planning and Social Security**

to the

**Conference of the Parties, 21st Session (COP 21)
Of the United Nations Framework Convention on
Climate Change**

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Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

I join others who have preceded me in congratulating the Government and people of France for the excellent arrangements in hosting this Leader's Summit at COP21.

Mr. President, we know that this is a difficult time for the people of France. If I can offer any comfort it is that we admire the strength, courage and solidarity of the citizens of this great nation.

Despite the painful challenges that you and your nation have faced in recent days, we note that you have invested heavily in preparing our delegations for this encounter in the cause of our planet. We applaud, in particular, your efforts in ensuring that our Small Island Developing States have a voice in this historic gathering.

With Paris' unmatched record of Agreements to secure peace and prosperity in our world, there could not have been a better choice of venue for this conference.

By the end of COP21, we will either be acclaimed as the generation of leaders that

heeded the pleas of our peoples by arriving at, and adopting a strong, comprehensive, legally binding agreement to fight climate change or derided as the leaders who lacked will, courage and conviction and condemned our planet and its inhabitants to a future of despair, destruction and death.

We have been presented with two options and we need to choose: we either condemn our planet to further destruction or we save it. Those are our stark choices.

UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES OF SMALL STATES

Mr. President, if I am found to speak with passion, it can only be explained by the fact that I represent a country that is a Small Island Developing State, which, like others in common, is characterized by its unique circumstances and special vulnerabilities. The devastating effects of climate change on our countries are well known and documented. There is no need to rehearse the facts.

Yet, despite irrefutable evidence and scientific data, there appears to be a sinister attempt to downplay and negate the unique vulnerabilities

of our States in the outcome of COP21. My country wishes to state unequivocally that this is one principle that is neither negotiable nor open to re-interpretation.

A LONG TERM TEMPERATURE GOAL OF 1.5°C

Excellencies, 2015 will almost certainly be the hottest year on record for our planet. All of the data suggest that the high temperature mark set in 2014 will be obliterated this year. Equally ominous is the revelation that by the end of 2015, the temperature of our planet will have increased by one degree Celsius above pre-

industrial levels. In simple terms, we have already passed the half-way mark to the 1.5 degree Celsius limit that has been recognized by the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change as the temperature threshold for Small Island Developing States.

The emission reduction pledges that have been submitted so far indicate that our planet will warm by 2.7 degrees Celsius by the end of this century. This is unacceptable. I add my voice to the pleas for more ambitious cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

I also strongly support the call for five-year reviews of mitigation pledges, with a major

political moment in 2018 or 2019 when we can do a global stock-take. We must spare no effort to put us on a trajectory for warming of no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2100.

LOSS AND DAMAGE IN THE TEXT OF THE AGREEMENT

Mr. President, the issue of Loss and Damage is a serious one for my country, other Small Island Developing States and many other developing countries. While it is true that we no longer debate the legitimacy of loss and damage in climate change negotiations, we need the Paris Climate Change Agreement to specifically recognize loss and damage as a critical issue for

Small Island Developing States (SIDS), separate from adaptation. We will not be satisfied unless the Paris Agreement can lay the framework for an international mechanism that will help us address this grave problem.

EASE OF ACCESS TO CLIMATE FINANCE

The final issue that I want to address is Climate Finance. It is well known that many of the countries of the Caribbean have highly indebted economies. Less well known is that much of this debt has been accumulated in the repair and recovery efforts that follow the frequent extreme weather events. Adapting to climate change is beyond the capacity of our

economies. We need quick, efficient and direct access to climate finance to make our economies and societies more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Mr. President, we are not the cause of climate change. Those who have a historical responsibility for the problem have a moral responsibility to fix it. They must help us adapt to the unrelenting and inevitable consequences already unleashed by the greed and abuse of the resources of our planet.

CROWN A YEAR OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Unquestionably, we have an historic opportunity before us.

At the beginning of the year, we concluded a new framework for disaster risk reduction in Sendai. A few months later, we assembled in Addis Ababa and finalized a bold agenda for financing our development. Then, in September, on the eve of the 70th anniversary celebrations of the United Nations, we committed to seventeen sustainable development goals to guide global

development over the next fifteen years. Now, it is time to crown this watershed year of major successes in the cause of our collective humanity by concluding with a powerful climate agreement for our planet and our people.

In that way, we will ensure that 2015 will be famous for more than the record heat and devastation that it unleashed on our planet.

I thank you.