

# Belize



**SPEECH BY**

**SENATOR HON. LISEL ALAMILLA**

**MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE 18<sup>TH</sup> CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO  
THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE  
CHANGE (UNFCCC-COP 18)**

**AND**

**THE 8TH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES SERVING AS  
THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL (CMP-8)**

**5<sup>th</sup> December, 2012**

**QNCC in DOHA, QATAR**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Mr. President,

Your Excellency Minister Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah.

Allow me to extend to you the warmest greetings of the Government and people of Belize. I also extend the appreciation of the entire Belize delegation to the people of Qatar for their legendary hospitality.

Mr President,

The Doha Climate Change Conference occurs at a time of unparalleled significance. It is here that we will define a vision of the future climate change regime. We face a choice. Do we want a future that condemns our children to suffer the consequences of our folly in locking in the lowest common denominator? Or do we want one that inspires hope for a safe environment for our children?

My delegation is here to endorse an ambitious vision for the future.

We applaud those countries that have taken the bold step to join the second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol. You have demonstrated much needed leadership. But, there is still more to be done! Belize adds its voice to the cry of all peoples for ramped up greenhouse gas emission reductions now!

We recognize that even with your targets, there is still some 80 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions that must be accounted for.

We therefore call on those countries that have opted out of the second commitment period to shoulder their responsibility to the world.

Without your commitment to undertake equivalent ambitious domestic reduction targets that can be monitored, reported and verified, you alone will jeopardize the righteous endeavours of all who are here to act to prevent dangerous man-made interference with the climate system.

Likewise, developing countries *a/so* have an obligation to limit greenhouse gas emissions. But we need the financial and technological means to

achieve our mitigation potential. Let Doha be the game changer in the ambition dialogue.

Mr President,

Belize is ready to make good on its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Our last greenhouse gas inventory shows that over 95% of our emissions are from the land use and forestry sectors. Therefore, our emission reduction actions are primarily focused on these sectors.

Belize has the highest percent of natural forest cover in the Mesoamerican region. Over a 30 year period from 1998 to 2010, our historic baseline of forest cover loss was estimated at an annual rate of 0.6 percent. However, the past two years has seen a significant increase in our deforestation rate compared to previous years. In order to mitigate this threat we are taking decisive policy measures for responsible land-use and development.

Mr. President,

Belize has demonstrated its innovation in the management of its natural resources. We emphasize the need for continued support for REDD-plus activities. It is imperative that this COP finalizes the outstanding methodological issues to operationalize REDD-plus. This will enable us to access the necessary resources to develop and implement the policies and measures required to address the drivers of deforestation in Belize, and to undertake and monitor the forest management systems that will allow Belizeans to continue using and enjoying our forest resources sustainably.

Mr President,

Belize's extensive coastal zone has significant potential to contribute to our mitigation potential. Recent studies show that Belize's national mangrove cover has remained relatively stable at 3.4% over a 30-year period from 1980-2010. Our low rate of mangrove clearing stands in stark contrast to recently published estimates of global mangrove destruction which indicates that a fifth of the world's mangrove ecosystems have been destroyed since 1980. Furthermore, a 2008 WRI study estimated that our coral reef and mangrove annual contributions exceeded \$500 million U.S.

dollars in tourism, fisheries and shoreline protection. Belize has done its legal and policy share to protect and manage these resources. If we were able to further quantify the role of our mangroves, wetlands and seagrass beds in sequestering greenhouse gases, we would be able to exponentially improve our conservation measures and provide the positive incentives for the Belizeans who depend on the marine and coastal resources to use these resources sustainably. We strongly encourage significant progress on the issue of Blue Carbon.

Mr President,

Adaptation is critical for Belize. Global warming has increased the number and intensity of coral bleaching episodes resulting in irreparable harm to our reefs. The marine resources that rely on the ecosystem provided by the largest barrier reef in the western hemisphere are feeling these effects and are either declining or migrating to more hospitable environments. Sea level rise is increasing erosion on the mainland and many of our offshore islands.

During the annual spring tides, the municipal airport in Belize City is now being inundated twice a day rendering the airport inoperable and disrupting domestic air transport. This is a new phenomenon for us. Droughts and heat waves are adversely affecting agriculture and poultry production and threatening our food security. Intense rainfall episodes which are now occurring annually are disrupting transportation, washing away bridges and undermining roads.

Adaptation comes at a great cost to my country. We underscore the inextricable link between ambitious mitigation and adaptation. If the international community fails to undertake ambitious actions to limit global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius, then the impacts of climate change to Belize will be significantly greater and more extensive. We realize that this is a very ambitious target to meet.

We can achieve it, if we begin to act now!

Mr. President,

There are some 23 million people on the island of Taiwan who also want to be a part of the global effort to combat climate change. We cannot ignore the fact that Taiwan is amongst the top twenty economies of the world and has been recognized by the World Bank as one of the leaders in knowledge economy. The UNFCCC cannot afford to ignore the invaluable contribution that Taiwan can make to this process.

If everyone plays their part and is recognized for those efforts, then we can be ambitious.

As Belize's first Minister of Sustainable Development I applaud and encourage your efforts to elevate the profile of women in climate change.

Mr President,

This is our opportunity for change.

I am confident that through your leadership our lofty goals will be well within our reach. Please be assured of Belize's support for a successful Climate Change Conference in Doha.

**COUNT US IN..!!!**