

# BELIZE



**STATEMENT BY  
HON. OMAR FIGUEROA**

**MINISTER OF STATE**

**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, FORESTRY, THE  
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CONFERENCE OF THE  
PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC COP 21)**

**AND**

**THE 11<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF PARTIES  
SERVING AS THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE KYOTO  
PROTOCOL (CMP 11)**

**DECEMBER, 2015**

**PARIS-LE BOURGET, FRANCE**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Mr. President,

Your Excellency, Minister Laurent Fabius

I wish at the outset to express my country's sympathy to the Government and people of France and, in particular, to those who lost loved ones as a result of the terrorist attacks in the city of Paris on 13 November, 2015. Belize mourns along with you. We sincerely appreciate your resolve to host this Conference.

Since Independence, Belizeans have articulated a common vision for a future of peace, tranquillity, and living in harmony with the natural environment. My government has established and will continue to strengthen institutions and policies to support this vision. Our National Energy Policy Framework ensures that renewable energy in our energy mix will increase from 63 % to 89% by 2033. Furthermore, on December 1, we approved a policy that bans offshore oil exploration in Belize's World Heritage Sites and within one kilometre on either side of Belize's Barrier Reef System, the largest reef system in the Western Hemisphere. This is equivalent to 15% of Belize's land area. This commitment is unprecedented globally, Mr. President.

We are proof that a growth model can be consistent with a climate resilient and low carbon future of sustainable development. If we can do it, so can the rest of the world.

Mr. President,

There is yet another truth to which Belize can attest. As a small island developing state, we are particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change. Unfortunately, this is an unenviable reality for all SIDs. If it were not for the Convention's recognition of our specific needs and special circumstances, we would have little hope to offer our people. The encroaching sea has engulfed many beaches thereby preventing our children from experiencing the pleasures we once enjoyed. Earlier this year, Belize was plagued by both drought and floods that devastated our agricultural yields and physical infrastructure. This is in addition to the 13 tropical storms and hurricanes that have affected us in the past 15 years, most of which has caused damages equivalent to 25 to 45% of GDP. Obviously, our path to sustainable development is being derailed by climate change.

For us, Mr. President, the overriding challenge is not how we mitigate the emissions of greenhouse gases, it is how we adapt to the devastating impacts of climate change.

How can a small vulnerable economy sustain itself in the face of such exogenous shocks? How can we do so and still hold on to our ambition for sustainable development? The challenge, Mr. President, is Sisyphean.

These examples provide the *raison d'être* for the new legally binding agreement applicable to all. While it must drive ambition for mitigation, the agreement must also provide resources for those countries that have to adapt to the effects of climate change now! The agreement must also ensure that, if all else fails, those communities, which suffer irreparable loss and damage, have the means to survive. The single factor that will make the difference is an agreement on a common goal for the stabilization of greenhouse gas emissions. The benchmark for determining that goal must be the survival of the most vulnerable of the SIDS.

The world knows that the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal would reduce the risks that would otherwise be experienced at 2 degrees. A commitment to hold global average temperature increase to well below 1.5 degrees in the new agreement would send an unequivocal and powerful signal that the world's nations are serious about tackling climate change. Such an agreement would also drive up ambition, create demand, and catalyse a new economic model for sustainable development. But the long-term temperature goal alone will not be sufficient.

For Belize, we also need enhanced cooperation and support to access the resources to meet that target. Every country has a role to play. None should be left out. This includes the Republic of China on Taiwan. The new agreement must be faithful to the commitment to SIDS, which is at the core of the Convention.

Mr. President,

Climate change is a Gordian Knot that is solvable only with bold action. We have made some progress. In September, world leaders agreed on a 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and earlier in July they created a new global architecture to finance sustainable development. COP 21 must now enshrine this achievement. We need finally, a clear commitment to ambitious action on climate change. Paris can and must deliver. You have every assurance of Belize's dedication to this end.