



Commonwealth of Dominica

Address by

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Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica

On the occasion of

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UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

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Today, Dominica stands on the front line/of the war on climate change.

At 5pm on September 17th/ out of the mid-Atlantic/ Maria emerged as a Category 1 hurricane/ with wind speeds of just over 120 kph.

Within twenty four hours this monster storm had moved from a category 1 to a category 5 hurricane/ with wind speeds in excess of 270 kph. Hurricane Maria was reported to be/ one of the most rapidly intensifying storms in recent history.

Our citizens barely had time to prepare/ before the ferocious winds and incessant rain began assaulting our nature island.

As night fell/ we hunkered down to await its onslaught. Some of us were forced to flee our homes in the dark of night/ seeking safe shelter/, buffeted and battered by the heavy rains and powerful winds.

When dawn broke/ the scenes of utter devastation across this once lush green island, were heartbreaking.

In some areas where houses once stood/ there lay mounds of dirt and debris/ others had their roofs blown off; Landslides scarred the landscape/ trees were uprooted or laid bare and flood waters raged. All utilities were non-functional.

Assessments conducted by the World Bank Group/ and other international agencies/ indicate that 90% of buildings have either been damaged or destroyed, over 224% of GDP was wiped out/ with major damage sustained to our agriculture/ tourism and housing sectors.

Public infrastructure was severely impacted and our forests decimated. Two months later 95% of the country remains without electricity/ our water systems are compromised/ many citizens remain displaced and in shelters.

This Ladies and Gentlemen is the reality of climate change.

Within a few hours an entire country was brought to its knees by the forces of nature.

Two years ago/ we convened in a similar setting/ and signed on to the Paris accord. We pledged as an international community/ to take positive proactive steps/ to stem the tide of climate change. The developed world pledged funds to be made available/ for the mitigation and adaptation of the harmful effects of climate change.

We know the potential impact of climate change/ and of countries that may disappear. How many of the countries/ that continue to pollute the planet/ had to suffer a loss of two hundred and twenty four percent of their GDP this year?

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen/ I present to you today that our countries remain under threat. To ensure our very existence/ the world must do better. We argued at Cop 21 for 1.5 to stay alive/ a commitment was made to 2/ but by all assessments we will not even achieve that goal.

Ladies and Gentlemen/ not enough is being done to ensure that we effectively mitigate the warming of our planet.

How many of our vulnerable small island developing states have been able to access green climate funds to make us more climate resilient?

What mechanism is there for us to be able to access emergency funds when facing a disaster like that caused by Maria?

We have been put/ on the front line/ by others. We were the guardians of nature. We have not contributed/ to global warming. Sixty percent of Dominica/ is covered/ by protected rain forests/ and has been so/ long before climate change. Our marine environment/ is similarly protected.

We are on the front line/ and this is not a metaphorical war, ...or a metaphorical line.it is one in which we bury the dead, console the grieving, nurse our wounds and call out for reinforcements.

And we grow weary,waiting for the world/ to hear our cry.

We hear that **now** is the time to act.

We read headlines/ of funds set aside. We smell the sweet fragrance of agreements/ promises and commitments. But we grow weary/ waiting.

Ladies and Gentlemen, despite the hardship we face/ we have decided to raise our standard.

We have publicly/ committed to the international community/ that we will rebuild ourselves/ as the first/ fully climate resilient nation/ in the Anthropocene. Our small island/ will shine the torch/ for others/ to follow.

But, we grow weary.

The international community has an opportunity now/ to truly demonstrate its commitment/ to battling the effects of climate change. We need you to partner with us/ to build a truly climate resilient nation/ a nation adapted to the new reality of/ fiercer, more frequent/ and more ferocious storms.

Ladies and gentlemen/ last evening's high level event provided the platform where/ a selection of non-party stake holders/ championed the critical message of accelerated climate action/ and how best to bridge the gap/ between non-party actors and negotiations.

We call on all stakeholders to help us to rebuild better and smarter.

Maria/ that winged messenger of climate change/ destroyed thousands of homes.

US\$200m is required to rebuild/ in more suitable locations/ and to a standard that makes them climate resilient. We call on stakeholders/ to partner with us to rebuild.

Maria destroyed our education and health sectors. The World Bank Report supports that US\$90m/ is needed to rebuild/ and make our schools, hospitals and clinics/ climate resilient. We call on the global community to partner with us/ to help us take on that challenge.

Maria ripped apart our water pipes. We need US\$56m/ to get running water again.

US\$37m/ is needed to establish an entire system of climate resilient agriculture/ irrigation/ and food production.

Dominica needs US\$15m/ to complete an investment in geothermal/ that would provide a significant boost/ to its renewable energy sector.

We are determined/ to restore our rainforests/ and protect our blue horizons.

We have grasped the moment/ to be the change we want/ in this world.

This isn't a rash promise.it is what we are struggling to do TODAY.

But battered as we are/ we stand before you today/ awake and tall/ to the challenge.

We call/ for your assistance, support and partnership.

We ask you/ to not allow climate change/ to be reduced to a cultural war/ fought from arm chairs.

We ask you/ not to allow the sceptics to sneer/ saying 'I told you COP was all hot air'/ and/ that 'nothing real will change'.

I urge you today/ not to betray the Paris Declaration! *Operationalise Paris.*

Give meaning to Paris....Now! Not on paper....but here in this forum!

Stand with us.

Pledge today/ to help fund/ the first climate resilient nation.

Help us/ to rebuild our homes/ schools/ pipes/ and hospitals,in a climate resilient way.

Join us. Join us. Do not leave us alone to fight this war.

Not yesterday, not tomorrow/ but today. Right now/ is the moment/ of truth.

Will it be the unraveling of Paris or the foundation of Paris?

That is the simple choice you get to make today.

It is a choice/ that will be measured/ by the degree of meaningful assistance you give/ to those suffering damage and loss today; yet fighting/ and fighting....on the front line.