

BELIZE



NATIONAL STATEMENT

UNFCCC COP 25

BY HON. DR. OMAR FIGUEROA

**MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, FORESTRY,
THE ENVIRONMENT, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND IMMIGRATION**

DECEMBER 9-13, 2019

MADRID, SPAIN

Madam President, Minister Carolina Schmidt;

Excellencies;

Distinguished Delegates;

Allow me to convey greetings on behalf of the Government and People of Belize.

I also extend my delegation's appreciation to the Government and People of Spain and the City of Madrid for being gracious hosts.

Madam President, Excellencies, Belize joins other nations in expressing its profound sympathies to the people of the Bahamas who have been devastated by the passage of hurricane Dorian. The disaster in the wake of this hurricane was unimaginable, and there was no exception to its destructive force as it passed through Great Abaco Island and Grand Bahama. Such a catastrophe is just a testament to the impacts of the climate crisis which, regrettably, is a harbinger of a new hostile global climate regime of our own making.

Madam President, it is with no pleasure that I open by making vivid reference to this most recent climate disaster, but rather it is to respectfully remind this honourable gathering of why we are here. We have to face the reality that time is invariably against us; the time for action is rapidly passing us by. Our sister small island states are now the ones taking the brunt of the unforgiving force of climate change; our economies are under threat; our very existence is under threat. Where is the equal and opposing response to avert this threat? Nations of the world, we need action!

For its part, Madam President, Belize has demonstrated the kind of climate mitigation and adaptation response that meets and exceeds expected commitments. Recognizing that forest conservation is the most economical mitigation option, Belize has advanced its REDD+ agenda through bold mangrove conservation

commitments, and through a 1% increase on top of its 34% of mature tropical forest already under protection. Recognizing that conserving our ocean resources represents one of the boldest adaptation actions coastal nations can make, Belize has decided to expand its no-take zones from 4% to 11.6% of its seas. Belize has also legislated that its maritime economy will follow a green development pathway, through the banning of offshore oil exploration. And Belize has made substantial advances in adapting its artisanal fisheries sector, its coastal infrastructure, and its policies and legislation to promote climate resilience. We sincerely hope, on behalf of all our sister small island states, and on behalf of all nations that sit in harm's way, that the major contributors to global warming will take bolder actions now, as we have.

Madam President, the Paris Agreement was historic and still represents the best chance we have at a global concerted effort to guarantee climate stability and quality of life for our children. In the Paris Agreement we called for ambition; thereafter we called for accelerated ambition; today we simply demand humanity – because it is what ties us together – from humanity comes emphatic action. As the global climate emergency intensifies and greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, nations of the world must take crucial steps now; the time for mere ambition has passed, the time for action is now. Here at COP 25 we have the opportunity to turn the tide of mere ambition into an era of action, transformational change and momentum to accelerate the achievement of the Paris Agreement. This is one of the last chances that we have to make a difference. All tools at our disposal must be employed to put the world on a transformational future of low carbon and high resilience. This means finalization of Article 6 arrangements for how international climate markets will work; this means strengthening the Warsaw International Mechanism for loss and damage; this means accelerated climate-financing for

developing countries to green their economies and build resilience; and this is all underpinned by urgent fulfillment of pledges for mobilizing \$100 billion annually.

Madam President, enhancing action requires inclusivity from all corners. To this end, Belize strongly believes that all nations should be afforded the opportunity to participate in the implementation of the Paris Agreement, including the Republic of China, Taiwan. Ensuring the participation of all nations in global mechanisms, negotiations and activities that promote the implementation of the convention would conform to the aims and spirit of the convention.

Madam President, we have a single mission, which is to protect our planet for the benefit of future generations. This mission will test our intelligence, our humanity, our compassion and our willingness to endure what is necessary and right. The solutions to the crisis are within reach, but to be successful in our mission, we need to take action now! Let us take bold steps for the sake of every man, woman and child who are depending on us. Please be assured of Belize's support for a successful Climate Change Conference here in Madrid.

Thank you!