

**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  
(UNFCCC)**

**Twenty-Fourth Conference of the Parties**

**(COP 24)**

**Katowice, Poland**

**Remarks by Honourable Dr. Gale T. C. Rigobert**

**at the Resumed High Level Segment on December 11, 2018**

Once again, the leaders of the world have gathered here at the 24<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to determine the plight of the particularly vulnerable, including the Small Island Developing State of Saint Lucia. COP24 will be the most important session in international climate change negotiations since the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015. This COP needs to adopt a robust set of rules under the Paris Agreement Work Programme that will enable all Parties to operationalise and fully implement the Paris Agreement.

As significant, if not more important for COP24, is shining the light on the need for much greater mitigation ambition - through the outcome of the Talanoa Dialogue and, indeed, all our work in Katowice. The urgency of this is starkly presented in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C, prepared in response to a direct request from this prestigious UNFCCC body. This game-changing report by renowned scientists from around the world, in both developed and developing countries, is the result of the

assessment of over 6,000 scientific publications and provides strong, legitimate, peer reviewed scientific support for the disproportionate risks facing small islands at a temperature rise of 1.5°C. We are clearly very far from reaching this 1.5°C goal. Current mitigation ambition, as evidenced by Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted under the Paris Agreement, cumulatively tracks toward 3-4°C of warming by 2100, with the potential for further warming thereafter. Indeed, we are already at 1°C of warming and may reach 1.5°C as early as 2030, if emissions continue at current rates. Pay attention, policy makers and world leaders! The year 2030 is a mere 12 years away. We do not have the luxury of time. The NDCs we submit in 2020 must show a step change in our ambition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit the temperature rise to 1.5°C .

The repercussions of the impacts we will suffer in the absence of ambitious action are not premised on some esoteric concept lodged in the minds of mad scientists and tree-hugging conservationists! Oh no! We are already observing and experiencing the impacts of climate change the world over and no one knows this better than small island states, such as, among others, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Haiti and Saint Lucia.

News of Greta Thunberg, a 15-year-old Swedish student, who single-handedly started a strike demanding that politicians in her country act on climate change, has spread around the world. The actions of one so young, are highly commendable, and I wish to highlight the following from her message to delegates here at COP 24 in Poland. She said, and I quote: *“The climate crisis has already been solved. We*

*already have all the facts and solutions. Why should I be studying for a future that soon may be no more, when no one is doing anything to save that future? What's the point of learning facts when the most important facts clearly mean nothing to our society? End of quote.*

How apt is Greta's message, at a point in these negotiations, where it appears that there are deliberate attempts to deny the science and play the role of the proverbial ostrich, sticking our heads in the sand.

Greta's indictment of our leadership in tackling climate change is stark, and I quote: *"We have not come here to beg the world leaders to care for our future. They have ignored us in the past and they will ignore us again"*. End of quote. However, as Minister with responsibility for education and climate change in my country, I harbour hope and faith in humanity, and I feel that it is my innate duty to implore you to make it a priority to complete the work that the world's children demand of us.

As leaders, we must find the resolve, political will and farsightedness to do what is right. As policy makers, business persons, managers, consumers, individuals, we must change the way we think, move around, design and build, earn and consume, if we are serious about making a difference.

A concerted effort requires inclusive multilateralism at its best. Climate change is no respecter of race, religion, geography, gender, political status or economic circumstance. We are all affected by the

vagaries of climate change. Therefore, we need all stakeholders to join in the efforts to stem climate change and to build resilience. Indigenous communities; NGOs; women's groups; nations like Taiwan, yet to be recognised by the UN and its subsidiaries as a bona fide state, but having to respond to its effects, regardless; the youth.... we need all hands on deck and give voice to those who are most affected. That's the power of inclusiveness as together we can go farther, faster.

As small islands, we continue to demonstrate by example, taking ambitious steps towards our transition to a low carbon economy, but the lack of ambitious action, particularly by the world's largest emitters, is negatively impacting our destiny. A more ambitious response is urgently required by world leaders and the science clearly demonstrates this.

Greta says that the world's leaders are behaving like children. I call on you to help show her and her peers that we have the ability to behave like the responsible adults that we profess to be. We must use the opportunity, now, to deliver a strong Paris Agreement rule-set and an unequivocal message on ambition. This message needs to be included in a COP decision that recognises the Talanoa Dialogue outcome and welcomes the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C.

Let us also put into effect our collective responsibility to invest in averting global climate disaster, including by delivering on the financial commitments made in Paris to support the particularly vulnerable.

We can transform our world to a better and safer place for the children of Saint Lucia, the children of all the nations of the world, so that in a few years, when Greta is interviewed again, she will be able to say that we backed our talk with action. I thank you.