

Address by
Rt. Hon. Hubert A. Ingraham
Prime Minister
Commonwealth of The Bahamas
at the
High Level Event United Nations Framework Convention on
Climate Change 15th Conference of the Parties to the
Convention and Fifth Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto
Protocol

Mr. President,

Colleagues,

The Bahamas joins its voice with like-minded states in calling for a strong political agreement in Copenhagen which will cause world-wide reductions in green house emissions.

Critical to success will be funding that will permit the developing world to take action to mitigate the consequences of climate change and adopt technologies that reduce green house emissions. Toward this end, we hold out hope for reaching agreement here on an enforceable agreement by mid-2010.

The Bahamas, a country of negligible greenhouse gas emissions will suffer catastrophic results if emissions are not stabilized and reduced. The Bahamas is the 5th most vulnerable country to sea level rise. A temperature rise of 2 degrees Celsius will result in sea level rise of 2 meters and will submerge 80% of our territory. It will drastically affect the health of our coral reef system; hence our strongest support for the AOSIS call for "1.5 Celsius to stay alive".

Announced commitments so far are inadequate and insufficient to cause a reduction in greenhouse gasses to a level of stabilization only.

What is more; if the developed world were to meet their announced targets toward reducing greenhouse emissions but the developing world continues business as usual, the reduction will be inadequate. The temperature of the planet will still increase to perhaps 4 degrees Celsius which will result in the most dire of consequences for some small island and low-lying states.

Mr. President,

The Bahamas has sustained repeated attacks by stronger and more destructive tropical hurricanes, sea surges and related coastal and in-land flooding necessitating repeated recovery and restoration costing hundreds of millions of dollars.

And slow onset processes continue to erode shorelines, damage freshwater resources and alter sea surface temperatures resulting in extensive damage to our coral reefs.

The Bahamas is not one island but a family of islands with needs to adapt in urban centres and in smaller, more remote Family Islands. Finding appropriate adaptation options are vital; already in our experience we have relocated an entire community, Crossing Rock in Abaco, following the impact of a devastating hurricane.

We ask the developed world to support the efforts of small, vulnerable island states such as ours by increasing and simplifying access to financing to modernize our electrical infrastructure, produce smarter electricity grids, adopt renewable technology and implement environmentally sound planning and development strategies for coastal and wetland protection. In particular, when funding mechanisms for mitigation and adaptation are agreed special account must be taken of the vulnerability of small, low lying island states.

I cannot over-emphasize the importance and urgency for the development of specific mechanisms so that countries like The Bahamas can access new, innovative, and environmentally-sound capacity building.

Only a collective response to climate change will ensure the safety and integrity of the most vulnerable countries, a comprehensive collective response that we hope will be embodied in the outcome of this meeting.

Finally, The Bahamas, recognizing that climate change is a threat we all face, is committed to collaborating with the family of nations to ensure our own survival and the survival of humankind in a sustainable development model for planet Earth.