



GOVERNMENT OF BARBADOS

STATEMENT BY

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TO THE

**UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

ON

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Madam President,

Heads of State and Government

Heads of Delegations

Distinguished delegates

Permit me at the outset to thank you, the Government and People of Brazil and the city of Rio de Janeiro for the hospitality and warm welcome extended to my delegation and to me.

Some 40 years ago at Stockholm we were warned about our stewardship of this planet. Two decades later, in this great city of Rio de Janeiro, with the provisions of the Stockholm Declaration largely unfulfilled and the dangers to the environment rapidly escalating, we met again, and decided on an ambitious plan aimed at finding a balance

between fulfilling the needs of the living, while meeting our obligations to future generations.

While many of the noble ideals enshrined in Agenda 21 have not been sufficiently advanced, it is nevertheless beyond dispute that the concept of sustainable development, and its definition – an inter-related and mutually reinforcing relationship between nature, the society, and the economy - emerged in 1992 as a new paradigm for development.

This represented a major turning point for the international community as we collectively agreed that it was impossible to address effectively the problem of environmental degradation without at the same time

resolving the problems of social and economic development and in particular of poverty.

Back then, as now, the world was undergoing a period of uncertainty, transformation and turmoil. We were just beginning to grapple with the political and economic consequences which flowed from the end of Cold War hostilities. Yet we recognized that current and future generations deserved a response commensurate with the clear and persistent dangers confronting humanity.

Our fears did not restrain our ambitions, but rather, strengthened our resolve. We saw those tumultuous times and a changing world order as an opportunity to change the course of history, and in the words of Maurice

Strong take *"the first steps on a new pathway to our common future."*

Today our world is still a long way from developing sustainably and we have strayed from the pathway we set two decades ago. In addition, we are presently undergoing an extraordinary and unprecedented period of turbulence.

The intersection of sovereign debt, jobs and growth crises places us on the brink of a prolonged global economic downturn. Discontent around the world has triggered a wave of political change with far-reaching consequences for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and severe, and climate change, recognized as a potential threat in 1992, is now a current and devastating reality.

Further, chronic development challenges including poverty, water scarcity, food insecurity, and health issues remain unresolved, or have worsened in the past two decades.

Despite the magnitude and scope of these challenges the opportunity is ripe to move beyond incrementalism to real systemic change and return to the pathway defined in 1992. John F Kennedy once observed and I quote "*Our problems are man-made, therefore they may be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants. No problem*

of human destiny is beyond human beings". The current crises and the collapse of confidence in the existing development model have opened the door for us to embrace fully the sustainable development paradigm.

It is true that we've been slow to heed the warnings from 40 years ago or stay on the pathway of sustainability we defined in 1992. It is nevertheless my considered view that the convening of this Conference can serve as an important moment to usher in a new era of shared responsibility, while renewing our collective determination to act. We must seize this historic opportunity to ensure that significant progress is made and not allow old or new divisions, or finger-pointing, to block progress.

It would be easy for me to catalogue the broken and unfulfilled promises made by our development partners. But, I did not come to Rio to remind others of the commitments to which they have failed to adhere, or to tell them what they should be doing. I am here to tell the world what Barbados has done, is doing, and will do to ensure a safe and secure future for current and future generations.

The track record of Barbados on sustainable development is second to none. My Government has committed to transform Barbados into the most advanced green economy in the Latin American and Caribbean region. In pursuing this vision, we have undertaken a comprehensive study on the policy implications and opportunities of this

transition. This study was conducted through an inclusive, open, multi-stakeholder process involving members of civil society, the private sector and trade unions. We benefited also from the invaluable support of the University of the West Indies and the United Nations Environment Programme.

In March this year I received the final version of the Barbados Green Economy Scoping Study which outlines a clear roadmap and governance framework to enable our transition to a Green Economy. We are convinced that this pathway offers a uniquely integrative and multi-faceted approach to achieving the goal of sustainable development.

Barbados has defined the Green Economy as "*An integrated production, distribution, consumption and waste assimilation system that, at its core, reflects the fragility of our small island eco-systems*". We are prepared to share our experiences with other developing countries, especially small island developing states (SIDS) and will utilize every opportunity to do so.

Madam President,

From 7th to 8th May this year Barbados, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) hosted a High-Level Conference under the theme "Achieving Sustainable Energy for All in SIDS – Challenges, Opportunities, Commitments". That meeting of Leaders and Ministers from SIDS adopted the Barbados

Declaration, which outlines an ambitious and action-oriented agenda for achieving the goal of sustainable energy for all in SIDS.

Some twenty-two (22) SIDS agreed to inscribe, in an Annex to this Declaration, a range of commitments in the energy sector. This represents a concrete expression of our determination to promote transformational activities in the areas of renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy access and low carbon development. No other group of countries has collectively expressed such a high level of ambition on energy in any regional or international forum.

For its part, Barbados has committed to increasing by 29 percent the share of renewable energy in the energy mix and, by the year 2029, to improving by 22 percent its efficiency in the use of energy.

Taken together, these measures will reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by four and half million tons as well as realize significant savings of foreign exchange.

I should like to commend the Governments of Australia, Denmark, New Zealand, Norway and the United Kingdom for pledging to support SIDS in the implementation of our ambitious commitments. We urge other development partners to join us on this journey to ensure our energy independence.

Barbados has thrown its full and unconditional support behind the UN Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All Initiative. We share fully his ambition of achieving the energy access, renewable energy and energy efficiency objectives in that Initiative.

Madam President,

In my capacity as a member of the UN Secretary-General's Panel on Global Sustainability, I championed the perspective that any new vision for global sustainability must encompass "the blue economy" or the conservation and sustainable management of marine and ocean resources.

Within the Caribbean we have recognized that an integrated management approach that involves all relevant stakeholders provides us with the best option for protecting the Caribbean Sea, our most valuable shared resource. Barbados has led the regional effort in the Association of Caribbean States to create the Caribbean Sea Commission. The Commission represents an oceans governance framework to promote cooperation towards effective management of the Caribbean Sea area.

Barbados calls on the international community to support this initiative, including the future designation of the Caribbean Sea by the General Assembly as a special area in the context of sustainable development.

Madame President,

At the first Rio Conference in 1992, the international community recognized that, given our unique and particular vulnerabilities, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) should be designated as a special case for development and the environment. Two years later, Barbados had the honour of hosting the First Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. That Conference represented the first attempt at translating the Rio outcomes into a specific and operational Action Plan for a particular category of countries. I consider that the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) remains the essential blueprint for the sustainability of SIDS.

Barbados welcomes the decision of this Conference to convene in 2014, the 3rd International Conference on SIDS. The international community can be assured that we will do our part to ensure the success of the Barbados + 20 Conference.

Madam President,

Barbados supports the call made by the Global Sustainability Panel to embrace sustainable development in a fresh and operational way and to bring the sustainable development paradigm into the mainstream of the global economic debate. We must find new ways, new tools and new mechanisms to achieve the principles

and objectives of sustainable development. I believe that the outcome we will adopt seeks to do that.

I am pleased that we have decided to launch a process to develop a set of global sustainable development goals as tools for pursuing focused and coherent action on sustainable development. These goals must be science-driven and evidence-based and Barbados supports a robust technical approach to define and develop them.

We also believe that it is essential that this new framework build on the successes and lessons learnt from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and incorporate areas such as oceans, food security, social inclusion and energy. Barbados intends to

play an active role in this new phase of work on the SDGs to ensure that the perspective of SIDS is incorporated in this emerging global framework.

Barbados supports also the work to be undertaken on developing broader measures of progress to complement Gross Domestic Product (GDP), given the, at present, inherent limitations of that concept.

Madam President,

Rio+20 did not achieve a new treaty, a new organization or a new set of financial commitments, as we did two decades ago. I am not convinced, however, that

outcomes such as these are always required as indicia of success.

I believe that Rio +20 will be remembered as that unique moment in time when we decided not to yield to our fears, but rather to transform this present period of global uncertainty and volatility into a major opportunity to set new agenda, which can then be developed more fully over the next few years.

President John F. Kennedy said also that "*Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable*".

The participation in this Conference of over 130 Heads of State and Government inspires such hope. I believe that if implemented, the outcome document that we will adopt

later this week will place us on the pathway on which we initially embarked, in Rio de Janeiro, this beautiful city.

Thank you.