



*Permanent Mission
of Barbados to
the United Nations*



STATEMENT BY

SENATOR THE HON. MAXIME MCCLEAN
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE
BARBADOS

AT THE

UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE

OF THE

71ST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

6 JUNE, 2017

United Nations Headquarters
New York

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Mr. President,

Barbados is pleased to participate in this important Conference, convened under the theme “*Our Oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14)*”.

It provides an important opportunity to focus the attention of the international community on our collective responsibility to preserve and protect our marine environment. We are especially pleased with the format of the Conference - which brings together all stakeholders to discuss how we can address collectively the opportunities and challenges of SDG 14 implementation.

As you know, Barbados is a small island developing state, or SIDS, with an ocean space several hundred times its limited land mass of 166 sq. miles or 430 sq. kilometres. As such, Barbados attaches great importance to the oceans and seas. Like other SIDS, Barbados has intrinsic geographical, cultural, social and economic ties to the coastal and marine environment. It stands to be severely impacted by the unsustainable use of the ocean and its marine resources. It is against this background that Barbados has systematically played an active role in multilateral efforts to address environmental and sustainable development issues.

Mr. President,

Barbados views the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as the overarching legal framework for all activities of the oceans and seas. As a framework instrument, UNCLOS has provided the basis for the crafting of a number of implementing agreements. UNCLOS has also catalysed the development of several multilateral environmental treaties to which Barbados is a state party. At the regional level, Barbados is party to the Cartagena Convention and is an active supporter and beneficiary of the UNEP Regional Seas Programme. We therefore welcome the adoption of the Regional Seas Strategic Directions during the 17th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Actions Plans in Istanbul, Turkey, in October 2015.

Barbados has also been a staunch supporter of the Caribbean Sea Initiative and has been involved in efforts to have the Caribbean Sea recognised as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development. While there is currently no international consensus on the establishment of special areas other than to reduce or contain pollution, we remain committed to working with others to protect and safeguard the unique biodiversity and the highly fragile ecosystem

that comprise the Caribbean Sea, as well as, the interwoven livelihoods of millions of Caribbean people.

Barbados recognises the benefits derived from ocean ecosystem goods and services, such as education, recreation, food and tourism. Specifically in 1983, the Government of Barbados embarked on a programme to improve coastal zone management in order to safeguard our coastline and protect significant infrastructure threatened by erosion and other coastal processes. With the assistance of the Inter-American Development Bank, Barbados was able to develop a globally recognised model programme of integrated coastal zone management that was built on the principles of participatory governance, evidence-based decision making, ecosystems-based adaptation and knowledge transfer.

We are presently engaged in a project to improve ecosystem services that reduce the impact of climate change on natural and built coastal assets. In particular, we are interested in adopting an integrated coastal risk management approach to address emerging climate risk. We believe that this approach will allow us to incorporate risk management solutions into infrastructure planning and regulation that will address current and future vulnerabilities, as

well as reflect changes in environmental and socio-economic conditions over time.

In this regard, Barbados stands ready to share the emerging lessons and the projected outcomes from this ongoing initiative with interested jurisdictions. We are particularly keen to work with partners and agencies that wish to support SIDS-SIDS Cooperation in the area of coastal ecosystems-based adaptation and management utilising SIDS-applicable models.

Barbados shares the view that an integrated and collaborative approach to ocean governance is needed to address the multiple stressors facing our oceans and their resources. We are cognisant of the negative impacts that ocean acidification and rising sea temperatures are having on the oceans and their resources. We have also witnessed the invasion of alien species, such as the lion fish and Sargassum seaweed. The expanding lionfish population is threatening the well-being of coral reefs and marine ecosystems, and the commercial and recreational activities that depend on the coral reef and associated habitats.

We also welcome continuing efforts to combat Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and overfishing. These destructive practices pose a major threat to the sustainability of local and regional fisheries. They also negatively impact the economy, employment, marine recreation and food security of Barbados.

We support the efforts of the Cartagena Convention and the Regional Fisheries Bodies to join forces in addressing this and other issues of relevance to SDG 14 implementation, including ecosystem conservation. We also look forward to partnering with others to support the establishment of an effective vessel monitoring system. We believe that the development of a vessel monitoring system for the region including effective national observatory platforms will also assist us in developing a catch documentation, reporting and traceability systems, and sustainably manage our fish stocks while enhancing our ability to export fish and fishery products.

Barbados is also very aware of the negative impact of land-based pollution on the marine environment. In this regard, we wish to highlight the important role that regional Protocols on land based sources of pollution can play in the successful and inter-connected implementation of SDG 6 and SDG 14.

Mr. President,

In closing, the authors of the First World Oceans Assessment noted and I quote “the greatest threat to the oceans come from a failure to deal quickly with the manifold problems. Many parts of the oceans have been seriously degraded. If the problems are not addressed there is a major risk that they will combine to produce a destructive cycle of degradation in which the ocean can no longer provide many of the benefits that humans currently enjoy from it”.

I thank you.