

**INTERVENTION ON DISASTER RESILIENCE AND CLIMATE
ADAPTATION**

**APRIL 21, 2021
US – CARICOM MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS**

Disaster Preparedness and Climate Adaptation

Mr. Secretary, we know that climate change does not occur in a vacuum, and that it has been the result of many a misguided policy. And while we seek along with the United States, to trace our steps back to the path of sensibility, we are faced in my region with an existential threat. A threat to our economic and socio-political future like no other, and a threat that we can try to tackle, but only effectively if done in partnership with, and with the support of key partners.

As our envoys recently stated to the leadership of the Foreign Affairs and Western Hemisphere Sub-Committees, while we welcome the return of the US to the Paris Agreement, and the appointment of a Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, we seek from the Biden Administration a meaningful relationship on these issues. We hope that policy discourse on emissions and the warming of our planet will be matched by inputs for preparedness. It is important to note that time is not on our side, especially when we talk about preparedness - this with a hurricane season almost upon us.

We need the redoubling with utmost urgency, of support for our national and regional emergency management agencies. Direct support through amongst others your Embassies which you mentioned recently in a speech, would be welcomed by each and every one of us as we seek to build out robust early and multi-hazard warning systems and local capacity. We also seek and need additional resources for regional agencies such as our Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). I daresay that deployable U.S. assets to the region could well ensure your ability to respond to us, your near neighbors in times of need.

While you have heard this before and will hear it again, US leadership in advocating for better functioning financial mechanisms for developing countries like ours is important if we are going to fight this climate change battle together. The cost of the impact of climate change, the cost of adaptation has to be factored into the equation of how we are characterized. Fundamentally, a vulnerability index is needed, this if we are to survive and continue to be the stable and positive contributors to this hemisphere that we are. Our stability, your stability are intertwined on this front.

Mr. Secretary I will end by saying that we have a collective duty to each other, to our citizens of today and tomorrow to stop treating climate change as a distant impending threat, and instead, to treat it as the palpable, very present, destructive force that it is. You have in us, our Caribbean Community (CARICOM) an ally in this fight. And we hope that we have in you and your Administration, an ally in efforts at preparation of the defenses needed for the battle that we wage against its effects.

THANK YOU.