

GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

National Statement
By
Honourable Gaston Browne
Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda
at
Summit of the Future

Monday 23rd September 2024

Mr. President, Excellencies,

The multifaceted environmental, economic, health-related and social emergencies we face are perhaps humanity's greatest existential challenges.

The timing of this Summit is critical as we confront these unprecedented global threats.

Our decisions now, impact not just us, but generations to come.

Despite decades of UN-led sustainable development conferences, little has been accomplished to safeguard the rights of future generations.

Whereas, the next generations, are poised to inherit the greatest technological advancements; with unabated climate change, perhaps they will have no earth to call home.

Our planet is finite, but human's current ambitions for unending economic profits and territorial expansion seemingly know no bounds.

This unsustainable trajectory, marked by escalating climate impacts, environmental destruction, economic greed, wars and threats of wars, poses an existential threat to all life on earth.

Temperature records are broken almost daily. Hurricanes, floods and droughts ravage our lands, while mangroves and tropical forests die. The world is burning. We must act now to prevent a catastrophic future. We must act now to prevent a catastrophic future. We must act now to prevent a catastrophic future.

This is our moment to change course, to future-proof our burning planet from ultimate destruction.

Who will compensate future generations for our selfish acts?

The principle that the 'polluters pay' is meant to guide us, but in reality, it is the future that bears the greatest cost.

The climate crisis neither affects everyone equally, nor is everyone equally responsible. We who have contributed least to the climate crisis are suffering its worst impacts.

To add insult to injury, the large polluters are paying themselves hundreds of billions of dollars for carbon credits, to protract their profligate use of fossil fuels at the expense of SIDS.

Excellencies,

Without a healthy planet, there can be no viable future for humanity.

We are integral to the solution, yet we neglect our obligations as world leaders because of a globalized economy controlled by a self-interested minority.

Bold new international agreements to end fossil fuel proliferation, innovative financial instruments, and advanced technology are urgently needed. The weight of history and the responsibility to the future rest upon our shoulders.

Small Island Developing States met recently in Antigua and Barbuda and laid out the future we want - the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS.

It is time for the international community to be as bold as SIDS and to shift focus; not just to sustaining our damaged ecosystems, but also ensuring equity and fairness providing climate and financial justice to all.

I call upon leaders and policymakers to commit to an International Financial Architecture that bridges gaps, alleviates inequalities, and fosters sustainable development.

Providing debt relief, and access to finance, should be based on countries vulnerability and resilience to respond to the myriad global shocks.

Tools such as the recently adopted Multidimensional Vulnerability Index and the SIDS Debt Sustainability Support Service, are reform measures that were SIDS led and should be adopted by the international community to meet the needs of all vulnerable countries.

Excellencies,

We urgently need to take regenerative action to ensure a viable planet and resilient prosperity for the present and future generations.