

**Presentation by Sir Ronald Sanders, Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda  
At Intimate high-level reception: A conversation on Climate, Peace and Security  
at the Residence of the Ambassador of Denmark, Christina Markus Lassen  
on Thursday, 23rd March 2023**

Small Island states are the greatest victims of climate change and global warming, although they collectively contribute less than 0.1 per cent of Global Green House Gas emissions - CO<sub>2</sub>.

The latest UN report is clear that human activity is responsible for virtually all global heating over the last 200 years.

The rate of temperature rise in the last half century is the highest in 2,000 years.

Concentrations of carbon dioxide are at their highest in at least 2 million years.

Thirteen countries are responsible for 68 per cent of the world's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Of the 13 countries, 4 of them – China, the United States of America, India and Russia – account for 55 per cent

The fate of the world rests on the conscience of these last 4 mentioned countries in particular.

Much irreversible damage has already been done to many countries and to millions of people.

The planet Earth – our one homeland – has also been wounded with consequences for all.

Communities in many countries have been displaced by extreme weather events, including within the United States where communities have been forced to abandon their traditional homelands.

In Antigua and Barbuda, all the inhabitants in Barbuda were dislocated in 2017 by Hurricane Irma.

They had to be evacuated to Antigua, *en masse*, and relocated to Antigua for 3 years at the government's expense.

Fortunately, Antigua and Barbuda is a unitary state; if not the inhabitants of Barbuda would have had no country in which to take refuge and no machinery to provide for them,

The same situation applied to The Bahamas in 2019, when Hurricane Dorian decimated the Abacos Islands (part of the Bahamas) dislodging the entire community who could, fortunately, be relocated within the country, or they, too, would have been left bereft of a homeland and abandoned,

Effectively, these persons were “Climate refugees” – a classification which has not yet been accepted in international law or in international provisions.

But they were the start of something big.

Their exceptionalism could soon become a global norm if Climate Change is allowed to rampage at its present rate.

Climate change and global warming have forced farmers from their lands in Central America and pushed them to the southern borders of the United States – living a life of despair in a waning spirit of hope.

Fisherfolk in island communities in the Caribbean and the Pacific now risk their lives every day, venturing further out to sea, because traditional habitats for fish are now parched and reefs are bleached.

Economies of developing states, especially small island states, are repeatedly set back by extreme weather events.

All of these small economies have incurred burdensome debt to build back destroyed countries and to try to build resiliently for the future.

Some of them have ratios of debt to export of goods and services that far exceed the 10 per cent international standard, rising as high as 20 per cent.

Current global financial flows for adaptation, including from public and private finance sources, are insufficient and constrain implementation of adaptation options in developing countries.

A World Bank report recently revealed that “richer countries, which significantly expanded their economies over the last decades, were the largest contributors of CO2 emissions, while small states are the most affected and face the most significant costs of adaptation.”

While the polluting nations get richer, the suffering nations get poorer.

The injustice cannot be more blatantly obvious.

Climate change has reduced food security and affected water security, making it impossible for small states to attain the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Global warming has created water shortages, extended periods of drought, followed by periods of intense rain and flooding.

These unusual cycles have wrecked food production and caused severe food and water insecurity.

Small states fear that, as these conditions worsen, competition for basic needs such as water and food, could create conflict within nations, and between nations.

The plea for compensation for loss and damage by small countries was only reluctantly considered at COP27 and appears to have been pushed off into a Committee to make recommendations to COP28 that might amount to little.

The sense of hopelessness in small states is rising even as temperatures and the level of the sea rise.

In the event, global peace and security are becoming unstable as inequity between nations grow as a consequence of Climate Change.

This is all intensifying as small states struggle to recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and as they try to cope with rising costs in the global supply chain and in the cost of living of their peoples.

The rule of law and democracy, within countries, is now threatened by the high rate of inflation, the significantly higher costs of important foods, and higher interest rates.

These conditions have combined to create dissatisfaction amongst populations, leading to a clamour for increased wages, and to protests and demonstrations in some countries, either opportunistically organised, or encouraged, by opposition political parties.

These demands cannot be easily satisfied by small economies, which are still struggling to recover from the impact of Covid-19, and which are now engulfed by the soaring prices that are a consequence of the Russian war on Ukraine.

In nine months, world leaders will gather at COP28 in Dubai.

They should not arrive with the same old approaches and the same worn-out promises.

The leaders of the most powerful nations – and the biggest polluters - should come at last to deliver climate justice to those countries caught in the vortex of the crises none of them caused.

Financing to the World Bank, the Green Climate Fund and others have to be scaled up for adaptation and building resilience.

And leaders of the major polluting nations must be prepared to compensate those, that they have harmed most, for loss and damage.

They have to deliver on the financial commitments made in Copenhagen, Paris and Glasgow.

Countries in Europe must be congratulated and applauded for the measures they have taken and the commitments they have given.

They are an example to others, who should be ashamed not to emulate Europe's exemplary stand.

The alternative is a world on fire, skating on thin ice – a prescription for all to sink.

We must strive for that dystopian prospect not to be humanity's future.

On peace and security, small states have lost all confidence in the UN Security Council whose five permanent, veto-holding, countries have failed to live up to their obligations to ensure collective peace and security in the world.

Therefore, if Denmark is seeking a non-permanent seat on the Security Council, small states welcome Denmark's efforts as a small state in Europe, in the hope that Denmark will stand with the small, championing our cause of peace and security in a world in whose bounty we have a right to share.

Thank you.