‘To deny climate change is to deny a truth we have just lived’ says Prime Minister of storm-hit Dominica

**23 September** – Pleading with all countries in the United Nations General Assembly – large and small, rich and poor – to come together to save our planet, the Prime Minister of Dominica, where the landscape, ravaged by back-to-back hurricanes “resembles a warzone,” said his and other islands in the Caribbean need help now to build their homelands back better.

“I come to you straight from the front line of the war on climate change,” Roosevelt Skerrit said in an emotional address to the General Assembly’s annual general debate. He said he made the difficult journey from his storm-battered country “because these are the moments for which the United Nations exists!”

Just two years after powerful tropical storm Erika had ripped through the region – leaving his country, known as ‘nature island’ a land of dirt and dust – he said Dominica, the Bahamas and others had been ravaged by perhaps the worst hurricane season on record, with Irma and Maria leaving loss of lives and livelihoods, and as yet untold damage.

Mr. Skerrit said that warmer air and sea temperatures have permanently altered the climate between the tropics of Cancer...
and Capricorn. Heat is the fuel that takes ordinary storms – “storms we could normally master in our sleep – and supercharges them into a devastating force.

The most unfortunate reality, he said, is that there is little time left to reverse damages and rectify this trajectory. “We need action and we need it now,” he said.

“The stars have fallen, Eden is broken. The nation of Dominica has come to declare an international humanitarian emergency.”

He concluded by urging ownership and responsibility for perpetuating harm that desperately begs attention: “Let it spark a thousand points of light, not shame.”

In an equally impassioned address, Darren Allen Henfield, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Bahamas, expressed his concern with the effects of environmental degradation and climate change on small island developing States, which are “threatening their survivability.”

“With what we have witnessed just recently with the passage of hurricanes Harvey, Irma and now Maria, I cannot underscore sufficiently the importance the Bahamas attaches to combating climate change, and the preservation and protection of the environment,” he said.

Stressing that “climate change is global,” he emphasised the damage that hurricane Irma had in the Bahamian archipelago. Indeed, while the Bahamas had not suffered a direct hit, it was not totally spaced. The southern islands experienced serious damage. Additionally, tornadoes inflicted considerable damage on the northern islands of Bimini and Grand Bahama.

Highlighting the election of a new Government for his country the past May, the Minister spoke on its intention of creating the first fully green island in the region, out of the destruction of Ragged Island, which became uninhabitable.

“For the first time in its history, The Bahamas evacuated whole communities to safe quadrants ahead of Hurricane Irma. What’s next: wholesale evacuation of the entire Caribbean?” he asked, calling on the international community to act fast and in a co-ordinated way.

In his address, the Foreign Minister also highlighted the “need to re-evaluate of the measurements used to determine economic well-being” in the country, to allow them to receive development assistant.

**Tackling ‘curse of poverty’ tops Indian Government’s agenda, UN General Assembly told**

*23 September* – The complete eradication of poverty is the most important priority for the Government of India, its Minister for External Affairs told the United Nations General Assembly today, as she outlined some of the measures taken to advance this goal.

“There are two ways of addressing the curse of poverty,” Sushma Swaraj said in her address to the Assembly’s annual high-level debate.

“The traditional method is through incremental levels of aid and hand-holding. But our Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has chosen the more radical route, through economic empowerment,” she noted.

“The poor are not helpless: we have merely denied them opportunity. We are eliminating poverty by investing in the poor. We are turning
them from job-seekers into job-providers.”

Among the Government’s initiatives, Ms. Swaraj cited the Jan Dhan plan, by which some 300 million Indians – roughly equivalent to the population of the United States – who had never crossed the doors of a bank today have bank accounts.

She also highlighted programmes to provide bank credit to those who want to start small businesses; to train poor and middle-class youth for employment; to provide free gas cylinders to the poor so that women do not have to suffer the dangerous consequences of wood-fired kitchens; and remove “black money” from circulation.

She noted that nations with rising capabilities will be able to generate such change, but the developed world must become an active partner in helping those vulnerable countries still mired in poverty to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the target date of 2030.

Agreed by world leaders in 2015, the SDGs, also known as the Global Goals, are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

**At UN Assembly, Iraq outlines vision for post-conflict reconstruction**

23 September – Iraq is an independent sovereign federal State following democratic processes which have enabled all its people to participate in society, said the country’s top foreign affairs official at the United Nations General Assembly, expressing opposition to a referendum planned by the regional government of Kurdistan.

“The Government always encourages the cohesive status of all components (of society),” said Minister for Foreign Affairs Ibrahim Abdulkarim Al-Jafari during the Assembly’s annual high-level debate, noting that Iraq must preserve its unity and territory.

Therefore, he said, the Government has appealed to the Supreme Court to reject the referendum planned for late this month.

His country will hold its legislative and parliamentary elections in the first three months of 2018 aimed at consolidating political stability and economic progress.

He thanked countries that supported his Government forces in liberating Mosul and other cities from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) terrorists. However, he said that “history teaches us that conflict goes beyond the challenges of war,” meaning that there remains a hard road ahead for post-ISIL reconstruction and reconciliation.

Da’esh’s so-called environmental terrorism destroyed the country’s heritage sites and its natural resources.

Iraq’s comprehensive vision for the future centred on restoring peace, providing basic services, allowing people to return to their homes and facilitating post-conflict reconstruction.

Among other national priorities, Iraq was re-establishing its national security forces and rule of law, as well as continuing to combat corruption, which provided fertile ground for terrorists and crime.

In addition, the UN Security Council recently mandated a joint investigative mechanism to collect and preserve evidence about ISIL actions in Iraq, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, he said, calling for necessary support and financial resources to fund that mechanism.
At UN Assembly, sub-Saharan leaders call for increased UN aid to regional anti-terror force

23 September – Citing the continuing deterioration of the security situation in the sub-Saharan Sahel, regional leaders at the General Assembly’s annual general debate today called on the United Nations to provide sufficient resources to the regional G5 Sahel joint force to combat the scourge.

“Multifaceted support from the international community and our Organization is indispensable,” Chadian Foreign Minister Hissein Brahim Taha, Minister for Foreign Affairs said.

In June the UN Security Council endorsed the formation the G5 Sahel joint force, comprising Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, to combat terrorism and transnational organized crime in the restive region.

Beyond attacks perpetrated by the Nigerian Boko Haram movement, Mr. Taha also highlighted a host of other regional concerns including climate change and the drying up of Lake Chad upon which 50 million people depend for their livelihoods, all of which contribute to the massive migration crisis.

Niger voiced its concern at the lack of international support for the G5 Sahel force. “What is at stake in the Sahel is a battle not only for regional peace and security but also for international peace and security,” Foreign Minister Ibrahim Yacoubou told the Assembly.

“As the three major threats facing Niger, he cited the situation in Libya where terrorists and arms traffickers have free rein, the battle against Boko Haram in the Lake Chad area, and the fight against terrorists and arms traffickers in northern Mali.

National sovereignty and non-interference must be respected within UN, Burundi tells Assembly

23 September – Mounting the podium of the General Assembly, Burundi today stressed the importance of national sovereignty within the United Nations.

“We can never say it too often: Burundi believes that non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States, constitute the pillars of a balanced international system in conformity with the dictates of the UN Charter. These principles are non-negotiable,” Foreign Minister Alain Aimé Nyamitwe told the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate.

He broached many of the crises and conflicts facing Africa, lamented the new wave of racism arising from the recent flood of refugees and
migrants, and criticized European sanctions against his country which he said impeded its reaching its development goals.

Sudan has ‘turned the page’ on conflicts, Foreign Minister tells UN Assembly

23 September – Addressing the United Nations General Assembly’s annual general debate, Ibrahim Ahmed Abd al-Aziz Ghandour, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sudan, said his country has “turned the page” on conflicts and has embarked on an era of peace and stability, including through the establishment of a unity Government that includes members of former armed groups.

Expressing the hope that the international community, including the UN Peacebuilding Fund and the World Bank, would support the Government’s ongoing efforts carry out the national dialogue, he said, and also encouraged the remaining armed groups to join this quest for peace.

Recalling that the Government had extended its unilateral ceasefire until October, he expressed Sudan’s deep concern at the lack of strict action by relevant UN entities and the international community vis-à-vis rebel groups operating from Libya and South Sudan.

He went on to say that Sudan opposed the politicization of international justice and considered the International Criminal Court to be an organization that manipulated the law for political objectives.

The Sudanese Foreign Minister emphasized the Government’s efforts to fight terrorism, human trafficking, drug trafficking and cybercrime, as well as its assistance to three million refugees from neighbouring countries and beyond. On a recent visit, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees commended Sudan for opening its borders when others were closing theirs.

Sudan was committed to working with IGAD and the African Union towards peace and security in South Sudan and to help address the humanitarian crisis there. Having met all technical conditions, Sudan looked forward to having its outstanding foreign debt forgiven, in line with the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, he said.

In UN address, South Sudan urges balanced approach to peace, development

23 September – Addressing the United Nations General Assembly’s high-level debate, the First Vice-President of South Sudan called for incentivising peace and stability by shifting the focus to development and long-term projects.

“We cannot continue to clean the floor while the tap is open. The old paradigm that humanitarian intervention is first and development later is not a viable policy in the case of South Sudan,” Taban Deng Gai told the world body in New York.

He commended the efforts of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the African Union and international partners to shun and isolate political actors that sought power through violence.

“Nonetheless, we do not wish to delude ourselves that peace, unity
and development can be achieved overnight,’’ he said, adding that “the realization of peace takes time.”

He said South Sudan would redouble its efforts to improve access for humanitarian access, but hopes that the international community would recalibrate its development and humanitarian support.

Mr. Deng also noted the need for policies to be “South Sudanese-led’ and “home grown” if they are to achieve sustainable results.

The ultimate goal, Mr. Deng said, is “to give an opportunity for peace to all South Sudanese which will enable them to choose their own leaders through free, fair and credible elections.”

He added that the country has witnessed refugees and internally displaced persons gradually voluntarily returning to their villages, and the National Dialogue Initiative announced by President Salva Kiir is making progress.

**At UN Assembly, Saudi Arabia pledges to press ahead in combat against terrorism, extremism**

23 September – The threat of terrorism is among the most serious challenges facing the international community, Adel Ahmed Al-Jubeir, Minister for Foreign Affairs told the United Nations General Assembly today, stressing that his country would continue to work to counter the scourge, as well as extremism in all forms and manifestations.

The crisis in Qatar had jeopardized his country’s policy of cutting off funding to terrorists and extremists. Doha’s financial support of terrorism, and dissemination of violent hate speech, was unacceptable, as was its policy of providing safe haven to those who violated the law. The position taken by the four States was meant to demand that Qatar follow the principles of international law in fighting terrorism, he explained.

Pledging in the United Nations General Assembly to continue providing aid to members of the Rohingya minority fleeing Myanmar, Saudi Arabia today urged the Government of Myanmar to protect its population from discrimination.

“My country is gravely concerned and condemns the policy of repression and forced displacement carried out by the government of Myanmar against the Rohingya minority,” he said.

He said the “human tragedy” runs counter to all human rights, humanitarian values and international laws, and urged the Government to bring about an end in line with the UN principles.

The Foreign Minister said that Saudi Arabia will disperse $15 million in assistance to host some 500,000 peoples, while also personally intervening with neighbouring countries and Bangladesh to ensure safe passage and house families in decent living conditions.
Syrian Government has spared no effort to end bloodshed, Deputy Prime Minister tells UN

23 September – The Syrian Government has spared no effort to put an end to the war that has besieged the country for the past six years, but the bloodshed continues owing to the “aggressive policies” by some States, Deputy Prime Minister Walid Al-Moualem told the United Nations General Assembly today.

“No people has suffered at the hands of terrorism more than the Syrian people, who, for six years now, has fought against terrorists pouring from all over the world, supported by parties from the region and beyond,” said Mr. Al-Moualem, who is also the country’s Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Since March 2011, Syria has been in the throes of a conflict that has forced more than half of all Syrians to leave their homes. An estimated 5 million Syrians have fled the country and more than 6 million are internally displaced. The crisis, described as the worst humanitarian disaster of our time with more than 13 million people in need of assistance, has caused untold suffering for Syrian men, women and children.

The UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, has been working to bring the parties to the negotiating table and an end to the war.

Mr. Al-Moualem stated that since day one, the Syrian Government has positively considered all initiatives to put an end to the war. “However, these initiatives eventually failed after States that supported and fueled terrorism decided to persist in their aggressive policies against Syria and its people.”

He noted that the so-called ‘Geneva process’ has yet to bear fruit “in the absence of a genuine national opposition that can be a partner in Syria's future, and as countries with influence over the other party continue to block any meaningful progress.”

“It is truly unfortunate that these countries that block a solution in Syria are members of this international Organization, including permanent members of the Security Council,” he added.

Certain countries, the Prime Minister said, have boasted about fighting terrorism in Syria and having the interests of Syrians at heart. “They have established ‘coalitions’ and held dozens of conferences under deceiving titles, such as ‘friends of the Syrian people’.

“It is quite ironic that those are the same countries that are shedding the blood of thousands of Syrians by supporting terrorists, bombing innocent civilians, and destroying their livelihoods.”

Syria was, however, encouraged by the Astana process and the resulting ‘de-escalation zones’ and hoped that it will result in an actual cessation of hostilities and separate terrorist groups, such as ISIL, Al-Nusra and others, from those groups that have agreed to join the Astana process.

“This will be the real test of how committed and serious these groups and their ‘Turkish’ sponsors are,” said Mr. Al-Moualem.

“So far, Turkey under Erdogan has persisted in its aggressive policies against the Syrian people and has continued to labor under the illusion that terrorism will help serve its subversive agendas in Syria and the countries of the region. Turkey’s position stands in stark contrast to the positive and constructive role played by Russia and Iran,” he added.
Small island nations in Pacific urge global action to fight climate change

23 September – Leaders from Pacific island nations addressing the United Nations General Assembly today urged Governments to implement the Paris Agreement, and contribute to fighting climate change and supporting sustainable development efforts.

“Micronesia expresses grave concern that some countries have chosen to break with the international community and neglect the Paris Agreement, contrary to all of the best scientific advice,” the country’s Vice President, Yosiwo George, said in the UN General Assembly Hall in New York.

Agreed by 195 nations, the 2015 Paris Agreement seeks to combat climate change and unleash actions and investment towards a low carbon, resilient and sustainable future. Its main aim is to keep global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius and to drive efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

In addition to implementing the Agreement, Mr. George urged world leaders to support the Green Climate Fund which aims to finance “green” investments in developing countries.

He voiced concerns about lack of ambition in face of mounting threats to the health of the oceans, urging a special provision to be created for small island developing states within the UN Law of the Sea Convention on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological areas.

Fishing rights in exclusive economic zones are of particularly concern, Mr. George said, urging the international community “to remain steadfast in our efforts to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in all its forms.”

The head of Government in Papua New Guinea expressed similar concerns, noting that the global fish stocks are being “decimated” and “people are being forced to abandon their traditional homes because they have to jobs or food.”

Peter O’Neill told the UN General Assembly that the problem of unsustainable use of natural resources is part of the bigger issue of climate change and its adverse impacts, which include seawater flooding in coastal communities, extreme tropical storms and severe droughts.

“In Papua New Guinea, and around the world, our people are dying as a consequence,” Mr. O’Neill said. “Living standards are being eroded and opportunity denied.”

“The world needs increased action now, to make further commitments to reduce emissions, and to help communities respond effectively to the climate change challenges,” he added.

Noting the challenges facing refugees and migrants around the world, Mr. O’Neill also called for a “more sensible and humane” approach to mobility, noting that more people will be dislocated in the future by natural disasters and the loss of livelihoods.

In the same vein, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Marshall Islands underscored that the science behind climate is very real and urged that global confidence in the Paris Agreement must not waver in the face of any short-term challenges.

“The Paris Agreement is only as strong as the political confidence which stands behind it – and it is beyond imperative that, even in these early moments, committed nations are starting the challenging task of pushing ourselves to do even more,”
said Minister John Silk.

In his address, the Minister also underscored the importance of the Sustainable Development Goal, and in particular, Goal 14, on the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

Also in his remarks, Mr. Silk expressed condemned the recent nuclear and missile tests conducted by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), adding that he is appalled by the threat of an atmospheric nuclear test over the Pacific Ocean.

**In General Assembly address, Bahrain calls for strong, stable Middle East**

*23 September* – Bahrain reiterated its support for a strong Middle East in its United Nations General Assembly address, underscoring the need for strong and common political will to guarantee positive relations with other countries, support for the principles of non-interference in others internal affairs, and reaffirmation of the fight against terrorism and its sponsors.

“As partners, we can work together to preserve the security of the Gulf region, to combat terrorism and to provide protection for international navigation and commerce routes,” said the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, addressing the world body in New York.

He also urged compliance with international conventions and instruments to address the greatest challenge facing the international community – terrorism.

“Terrorism is no longer confined to terrorist organizations that can be confronted and eliminated. Rather, that menace has become a tool in the hands of States determined to create crises in other countries in pursuit of their own agenda” he said, adding that it is no longer acceptable to allow rogue countries to occupy others’ territories, violate the sovereignty of States, threaten international peace and security, support terrorism and spread hate and anarchy.

In his address, Foreign Minister Yousef bin Alawi bin Abdullah of Oman highlighted his country’s adherence to UN principles. “We call upon all states to exert more efforts to help the United Nations restore its pivotal role in international relations,” he said.

“The Sultanate of Oman invites the United Nations and the International Community to take up their responsibilities and strive to achieve peace, prevent conflicts and wars and settle difference, through dialogue and peaceful means. In this respect, my country renews its readiness to work with the United Nations to build a new world of security and stability.”
Talk of African renaissance ‘misplaced and premature,’ Eritrea tells UN Assembly

23 September – Africa remains the most marginalized of all continents, and therefore talk of an ‘African Renaissance’ and of ‘fastest growing economies’ is misplaced and premature, Eritrea’s top foreign affairs official told the United Nations General Assembly today.

“We should not flatter ourselves, or allow others to flatter us,” said Minister for Foreign Affairs Osman Saleh Mohammed at the Assembly’s annual high-level debate.

“Africa remains a producer and small-bit exporter of primary products. It retains minimum revenue from this export, with foreign companies getting the lion’s share,” he added.

He noted that processing of primary products, value-addition, industrialization, technology development barely exist. African economies, physical and social infrastructure, institutional and governance structures, peace and security architectures remain undeveloped.

Yet, Africa boasts tremendous human and natural resources; indeed, over 60 per cent of global natural resources lie in Africa.

Mr. Mohammed said that people can speak of Africa taking its rightful place in the world, only when Africa’s economies, the quality of its infrastructure, the standards of its health and educational institutions, the level of its artistic, scientific and technological products, the effectiveness of its institutions and enterprises, and more importantly the quality of life of its citizens, reflect more accurately its great potential.

Eritrea – a young nation, strategically located and with significant human and natural resources – is laying the ground for broad-based and sustainable economic development, and has also embarked on a massive, water and soil conservation, as well as an afforestation program, as part of its comprehensive plan to enhance the environment and fight climate change.

“Eritrea is confident it will meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ahead of time,” he said.

At UN Assembly, DPR Korea denounces US President’s ‘reckless and violent’ comments

23 September – The Foreign Minister of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) today denounced United States President Donald Trump’s “reckless and violent words,” saying that the US leader himself is on a “suicide mission.”

“In case innocent lives in the US are lost because of this suicide attack, Trump will be held totally responsible,” Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho told the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate, referring to President Trump’s statement to the world body earlier in the week pledging to ‘totally destroy’ the DPRK if the US is forced to defend itself and saying that its leader is on a ‘suicide mission.’

The Foreign Minister called on the UN sanctions imposed upon it for its nuclear and missile tests “unprecedented acts of injustice.”
“Due to his lacking basic common knowledge and proper sentiment, he tried to insult the supreme dignity of my country by referring it to a rocket. By doing so, however, he committed an irreversible mistake of making our rockets’ visit to the entire US mainland inevitable all the more,” he said.

Mr. Ri said the very reason the DPRK has to possess nuclear weapons is because US hostility and nuclear threats have continued for over 70 years. “The possession of nuclear deterrence by the DPRK is a righteous self-defensive measure taken as an ultimate option,” he added.

“Unless true international justice is realized, the only valid philosophical principle is that force must be dealt with force and nuclear weapons of tyranny must be dealt with the nuclear hammer of justice.”

He stressed that the UN failure in fulfilling its role in realizing genuine international justice is primarily related to the undemocratic practices of the 15-Member Security Council, whose decisions alone have the force of law, where the five permanent members – China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States – are all nuclear powers with a common interest in maintaining their monopolistic nuclear status.

**Fight against drugs and crime aims to protect law-abiding people, Philippines tells UN**

**23 September** – The Philippines’ battle against corruption, crime and illegal drugs seeks to protect the human rights of peaceful law-abiding people, the country’s top foreign affairs official said today at the United Nations General Assembly.

“The Philippines integrates the human rights agenda in its development initiatives for the purpose of protecting everyone, especially the most vulnerable, from lawlessness, violence, and anarchy,” said Secretary for Foreign Affairs Alan Peter Cayetano during the annual high-level debate.

He said that the very principle of ‘responsibility to protect’ must encompass the vast majority of peaceful law-abiding people who must be protected from those who are not.

As a responsible leader, the country’s President, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, launched a vigorous campaign against the illegal drug trade “to save lives, preserve families, protect communities and stop the country’s slide into a narco-state,” Mr. Cayetano said, adding that the campaign was never an instrument to violate any individual’s or group’s human rights.

As of August 2017, the drug trade had penetrated at least 24,848 barangays. This is 59 per cent of the total of 42,036 of the smallest government units spanning the country’s archipelago.

The Philippines have also discovered the intimate and symbiotic relationship between terrorism vis-à-vis poverty and the illegal drug trade, Mr. Cayetano said.

These terrorists were somehow able to bring together an assortment of extremists, criminals, mercenaries and foreign fighters who attempted to take control of Marawi. The national armed forces will regain full control of Marawi from Islamic State-inspired terrorists.

On regionalism, he said, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, has overcome the divisions, fears, and hostilities of the past, forging regional cooperation in promoting growth, development, and peaceful settlement of disputes.
Cluster of extreme weather events leave no doubt climate change is real, Caribbean nations tell UN

23 September – The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, echoing other senior government officials today and throughout the General Assembly’s annual general debate, questioned how, after the spate of recent catastrophic events in the Caribbean, South Asia and elsewhere, one could deny that “climate change is real, and it is upon us.”

Shifting weather patterns, global warming and rising sea levels are impacts of climate change and, extending his nation’s condolences and solidarity to those affected, emphasized that resources, cooperation and collaboration of the international community will be required to help rebuild and build back better.

“The events of the last months in the Caribbean once more remind us all that small island developing States remain at the forefront of the impact of climate change,” Mr. Moses stated. Yet, in light of their re-categorization based on out-dated formulae of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, Caribbean countries will not qualify for aid and development assistance.

“I join my Caribbean colleagues in calling for a multidimensional approach that takes into consideration real national needs and priorities, “as well as these extraordinary circumstances,” to provide access to development assistance, aid and debt relief, as the Caribbean region embarks on the arduous task of recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction together,” Mr. Moses stressed.

Noting that oceans cover three-quarters of the earth’s surface and contain over 95 per cent of its water, he called “indisputable” the critical importance of its conservation. As an island State, Trinidad and Tobago is highly vulnerable to the unprecedented rate of marine biodiversity loss and the impacts of unsustainable practices on the marine environment.

He also highlighted that Trinidad and Tobago supported multilateralism and is committed to working collectively to find enduring and sustainable solutions to the many global challenges facing the world today. “We must all do our part in this noble endeavour for the good of humanity!” he concluded.

After expressing her country’s condolences and support for the Caribbean nations affected by the recent national disasters, Kamina Johnson Smith, Jamaica’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, told the Assembly that for her region, climate change is an existential issue that requires urgent and effective action.

Ms. Smith pointed out that the region’s catastrophic events have diminished its ability to strengthen resilience, adaptation and mitigation. Noting that limited resources are dwarfed by the huge sums required for recovery and reconstruction measures, she called on the UN to establish a mechanism to provide support and compensation to vulnerable countries affected by natural disasters.

In recognition of the vulnerabilities of small island developing States and the attendant complexities of their status as middle-income countries, Jamaica supports calls for a climate change vulnerability index to provide a standardized method for characterizing vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change. “This would enable international financial institutions and bilateral donors, to better channel financial and technical resources, towards countries most susceptible to loss and damage from climate change,” she said.

Ms. Smith announced that last April Jamaica ratified the Paris Agreement, adding that island States were at the forefront of the negotiations.

Noting that while contributing the least carbon emissions, islands bear the brunt of the damage, pointing to the risks climate
change poses to tourism, which plays a critical role in ensuring sustainable and inclusive economic growth and job creation for Jamaica. “We implore all Member States to abide by the commitments of the Agreement,” Ms. Smith said.

Also taking the podium, Mark Anthony Brantley, Minister for Foreign Affairs for Saint Kitts and Nevis, spoke in depth about ensuring a sustainable planet – offering thoughts and prayers for those impacted by the three hurricanes in the Caribbean and the two recent earthquakes in Mexico.

He highlighted the various countries and territories that suffered devastation, noting unimaginable destruction in a wide swathe of the Caribbean. Lives have been lost; homes and infrastructure destroyed; economies reduced to tatters; and years of development wiped out. “Hurricane season for 2017 is not over yet,” he warned.

He condemned the “sterile analysis” of GDP per capita that puts the island States in middle and high income countries, locking them out of accessing developmental assistance or affordable financing.

“It is a travesty and a tragedy for the world community to witness such destruction caused by forces entirely outside the control of Caribbean nations and then refuse to allow those nations access to the necessary resources to rebuild,” he criticized, demanding that a vulnerability index be developed as part of the matrix for accessing developmental assistance.

Pointing to “irrefutable” science, Mr. Brantley stated: “Our oceans continue to get warmer due to our continued abuse of our Planet Earth.” He advocated for treating these phenomena not as natural disasters but as the man-made disasters they are, appealing for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and all other actions that aggravate the effects of climate change. “We cannot continue to abuse our Planet and expect to remain unscathed,” he emphasized.

Also speaking today, Elvin Nimrod, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Grenada told the Assembly, “our hearts and prayers go out to all the victims in our Caribbean region, Mexico and across the world, who are presently suffering adverse effects of climate change and natural disasters.”

Based on recent activities in the Atlantic, he underscored “we just cannot dispute that the climate is changing,” adding: “For those that question the veracity of this science, the cluster of extreme weather events over the last few weeks ought to suffice in sounding the alarm.”

Stressing that such events disproportionately affect the most vulnerable, he advocated that special attention to be paid to women, children, elderly and disabled.

He reiterated Grenada’s commitment to the Paris Agreement, and speaking as Chair of the World Bank’s Small States Forum last June, Mr. Nimrod lamented the withdrawal of key partners from the accord, saying: “We do not know these partners to be unreasonable and, therefore, we encourage them to see their own self-interest within the framework of a successful Paris Agreement.”

On her part, Yldiz Pollack-Beighle, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Suriname, stressed that in addition to humanitarian aid, the international community must assist in restructuring socio-economic and physical infrastructure for future resilience, saying that “combining forces at a global scale has become crucial.”

The Foreign Minister also joined others expressing concern that Caribbean nations are being graduated into ‘Middle Income Country’ status, with a zero option to obtain concessional loans opening them up to foreseeable natural disasters. “I add my voice to the lamentation regarding the fact that the vulnerability of these countries should be taken into account when classifications are applied,” she stated.

In parallel, Ms. Pollack-Beighle pledged Suriname’s full support and cooperation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Calling its implementation a “formidable challenge,” she expressed her country’s belief that in addition to domestic resource mobilization, a wide array of financing mechanisms must be accessible to finance development, capacity building, and innovation.

On other matters, she stressed that only through political will, can more women in society excel to the highest echelons of
political decision-making and reiterated the importance of youth involvement in decision-making processes.

**In a globalized world, ‘we must live in each other’s shelter, not shadow,’ Ireland tells UN**

23 September – Expressing his faith in the United Nations and its commitment to responding to challenges such as the disasters presently plaguing Latin America and the Caribbean, Simon Coveney, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, said that and other issues require the UN to “move from debate to action.”

Strong partnerships, he told the General Assembly, would remain at the core of Ireland’s approach in working together for a peaceful and prosperous future, and he stressed that as international issues – from climate change to migration – increasingly intersect, “there are not unilateral solutions to these problems.”

The key to tackling global issues collaboratively, he continued, lies in the 2030 Agenda and its attendant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which together have the power and potential to transform the world.

Turning to efforts to reduce threats of violence and nuclear weapons, he said Ireland unreservedly condemns the series of missile tests by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), urging the country to de-escalate the conflict between the DPRK and the United States.

Part of peacekeeping means providing humanitarian assistance and contributing to international efforts, Mr. Conveney said, and explained how investing in youth will ensure a sustainable future. “We have a phrase in Irish […] which, broadly translated, states “praise the youth and they will come.”

He highlighted the prominence of this statement, particularly relevant to Africa, and expressed commitment to building a partnership with that continent, as well as pursuing other international relationships.

Mr. Conveney concluded his speech with a message on coexistence: “In today’s globalized world we must live in each other’s shelter, not shadow.”
Djibouti tells General Assembly a reformed UN central to confronting global challenges is needed

23 September – A reformed United Nations with increased resources must be at the heart of efforts to confront the host of crises threatening the world, from climate change and economic stagnation to stimulating development and combatting terrorism, Djibouti told the General Assembly today.

“All these challenges underline the crucial sustained and resolute collective action in order to confront them,” Djibouti’s Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf told the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate. “We must mobilize ourselves anew to give new life to multilateralism and emphasize the central place of the UN.

“The task is immense, the responsibility heavy. These challenges demand ambitious reforms and additional resources,” he added, focussing in three key areas – fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), management reform, and a reformed ‘architecture’ that enhances the efficiency of the Organization’s peace and stability missions.

Conflict is the major obstacle to economic development with enormous costs, including forced displacement, famine, the rise of communicable diseases, acute food insecurity and the rapid deterioration of respect for human rights, he said.

“Our Organization, more than ever, has an increased role to play in the prevention of conflicts and the resolution of differences,” he added.

Global challenges ‘a litmus test’ for leadership, Nepal Prime Minister tells UN Assembly

23 September – Noting that amid a complex and polarized environment, the global community faces challenges that include terrorism, climate change and mass migration, the Prime Minister of Nepal called for a greater display of wisdom, knowledge and capacity to address pressing issues.

“As we embark upon a path of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, [the] challenges are the litmus tests for our leadership,” said Sher Bahadur Deuba, the Prime Minister of Nepal, addressing the 72nd annual general debate at the United Nations General Assembly.

Recalling his country’s contributions to UN peacekeeping efforts around the world, he said that troop and police contributing countries must be given fair opportunities to serve in leadership positions both in the field and at headquarters. Also on peacekeeping, he stressed the protection of civilians must be prioritized and that the UN must move “from zero tolerance to zero case scenario” on sexual exploitation and abuse.

Also in his address, the Nepali leader urged for greater security for migrants and, in the context of increasing frequency and destruction by natural disasters, called for greater cooperation and coordination in prevention, mitigation and recover efforts.
He also spoke of his country’s commitment to human rights, noting that Nepal’s Constitution bans death penalty in all circumstances. He also spoke of strengthening of the country’s human rights commission as well as protection of the rights of women and other disadvantaged sections of the society.

Prime Minister Deuba also highlighted the recent local elections in his country – the first in 20 years – and said that preparations are underway to hold provincial and federal elections.

Also in his address, he deplored the actions of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) which he referred to as the “continued defiance” by it of repeated calls by the Security Council and the international community, and urged it abide by all relevant Council resolutions.

At UN, Tanzania – ‘as a country of refuge to many’ – stresses importance of regional stability

23 September – Tanzania has integrated ‘sustainability’ into its development plan 2016-2021, with an eye towards becoming a middle-income country by 2025, its top foreign affairs official told the United Nations General Assembly today.

“Tanzania has set a target growth from an average of 7 per cent in 2015 to 10 per cent by 2020 in order to reach a middle-income status by 2025,” said Augustine Phillip Mahiga, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, during the Assembly’s annual high-level debate.

He said this growth will ensure equity in the society by reducing the unemployment rate from the current 10.3 per cent to 8 per cent and reduce proportion of population below poverty line from the current 28.2 per cent to 16.7 per cent by 2020.

Collaborating with development partners and other stakeholders, the Government has developed frameworks for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include communication and dissemination strategies to make the goals understood to everyone, he said.

Dissemination is in both English and Kiswahili, a national language spoken by all Tanzanians, he added.

Tanzania has been a country of refuge to many for decades, actively participating in regional and international peace initiatives including the ongoing Burundi peace process. The peace talks are still on track, and it is encouraging to note that in some parts of Burundi, the security situation has significantly improved to permit the voluntary return of some 12,000 refugees out of almost 250,000 refugees who have been in Tanzania since 2015, he said.

Tanzania has also intermittently for decades been receiving and hosting refugees from pockets of troubled areas in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he said, expressing hope that the 31 December 2016 Peace Agreement, with its promise of timely elections, is fully implemented.
Maldives at UN Assembly calls for stronger UN to tackle global crises

23 September – A stronger United Nations is more than ever needed to address the multiple crises facing the world, the Maldives to the General Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate today.

“The United Nations is what we all make of it,” Foreign Minister Mohamed Asim said. “It is made up of us, the Member States. Its successes and its weaknesses are determined by how much we put into it.

“My country, the Maldives, envisions a United Nations that is fair, that is representative of its diverse membership, that takes into account the views and opinions of all, and forms consensus, based on compromise and dialogue. A United Nations that commits and delivers.”

As the representative of a State made up of low-lying islands, he underscored the dangers of global warming climate change. “There is no bigger global threat than that of climate change,” he said.

“Island nations, including the Maldives, are the first to be devastated by these impacts. But, we are not the only ones. Today, climate change is becoming a reality for the rest of the world – whether we choose to believe it or not,” he added, citing the intensity of the recent hurricanes to hit the Caribbean and the United States, and the Pacific islands last year.

DR Congo, at General Assembly, calls on UN mission there to focus more on development

23 September – The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which hosts more than ten thousand United Nations peacekeepers and where enormous resources over the past two decades have been devoted to bringing stability to the vast country, today called for the UN mission to be re-directed more to development.

“It is clear that nearly 20 years after its deployment the UN force cannot nurture the ambition of remaining indefinitely in my country or exercising its mandate under the same format without learning from the weaknesses that have been noted,” President Joseph Kabila Kabange told the General Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate.

“What is important and should be important in the eyes of all those who value the credibility of our Organization is the actual effectiveness of UN troops on the ground. That is why for several years now we demanded a re-dimensioning of the MONUSCO force with regard to its dynamic mission and the redirecting of the means thus freed up towards our developmental needs.”

MONUSCO, the French acronym for the UN Organization Stabilization Mission, was renewed in June for another year at a level of 16,215 military personnel, 660 military observers and staff officers, 391 police personnel, and 1,050-strong formed police units, several thousand lower than its previous authorized level.

On other issues, Mr. Kabila decried the rise of terrorism, called for full support for the UN’s 2030 Agenda that seeks to
eliminate poverty, hunger and a whole host of other social ills by 2030, and highlighted the threat climate change posed for humanity.

‘No alternative to multilateralism,’” in tackling global issues, Singapore tells UN Assembly

23 September – Noting that no one country can solve complex issues that transcend national boundaries, Singapore highlighted in an address to the United Nations General Assembly the need for a universal and rules-based multilateral system to confront the global challenges.

“The recent adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development showed that multilateralism can respond to new challenges, especially when there is political will and collective commitment,” said Vivian Balakrishnan, the country’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, adding: “When dealing with global issues like climate change, there is no alternative to multilateralism.”

In his address at the Assembly’s 72nd annual general debate, he said that model for the global architecture, which his country believes in, is one in which the world is open and interdependent, and characterized by enlightened national interests, win-win collaboration and sustainable development.

“But most of all, we need inclusive economic growth to empower all our people to lead a good and meaningful life,” he noted.

Further, highlighting that the transformation caused by the digital revolution would be positive only if ways are found to share the benefits widely and reduce inequality, the Minister noted Singapore’s efforts, including heavy investments in education and skills training for its people and to give everyone an opportunity to build a meaningful life.

“We want every Singaporean to have a stake in our growth and success as a nation,” he said.

Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister for Foreign Affairs for Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR), joined a chorus of other speakers addressing the Assembly in extending his nation’s “deep sympathy” to the people of Latin America and the Caribbean who have been affected by the recent natural disasters.

Underscoring the importance of the 2030 Agenda, he called for greater collaboration to attain peace and security, and to make progress on UN reform.

He expressed hope of creating a world without nuclear arms and weapons of mass destruction, reiterating his country’s support for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, saying “settling disputes by peaceful means and through diplomatic solutions is the best way as it is more durable and causes no loss of lives and properties of the people.”

The Foreign Minister called “the most remarkable achievement of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)” the maintenance of peace, security and stability in the region, primarily crediting partnerships and cooperation. He announced that his country will participate in the 2018 Voluntary National Review of the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development – demonstrating its aim to graduate from the list of least developed countries by 2020.

Mr. Kommasith said that despite the challenges of being a least developed and landlocked country, Lao PDR nonetheless seeks to become a high middle-income country by 2030, underscoring that it has pursued greater connectivity with the region to enhance its infrastructure, transport networks, and construction of the North-South and East-West economic
corridors. He concluded by calling on the international community increase efforts to ensure that development brings equal benefits to all countries, ensuring that his country is strongly committed to realizing the 2030 Agenda.