

The international scientific community has warned that we stand at the cusp of a global climate catastrophe, with a narrow and ever-shrinking window of opportunity to act to avert disaster.

If we fail to take the required actions to address climate change, millions of lives will be lost from disease, hunger and extreme weather events, some island states will disappear under rising oceans and poverty levels globally will significantly increase.

While the most vulnerable members of the global community will be the first to suffer the most serious and damaging impacts of climate change, even though they have contributed least to the problem, eventually no country - however wealthy or powerful - will be immune from the impacts of global warming.

Collectively, we have a moral and ethical responsibility to act quickly and decisively to prevent this tragedy from occurring.

Our response must be ambitious, urgent and commensurate with the scale of the problem.

We welcome the tireless efforts of the United Nations Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon to bring together leaders to inject a sense of urgency into these negotiations.

For many of us already experiencing dangerous adverse impacts of climate change, the stakes could not be higher.

The level of ambition of the Copenhagen outcome will largely determine our future survival as members of the international community.

Barbados remains optimistic that the international community will not callously disregard the welfare

and survival of such a large number of its members or that SIDS will be considered collateral damage in the quest for economic growth.

Barbados is not prepared to ask others to undertake actions that we are not prepared to do ourselves.

We are already taking measures to slow the growth our greenhouse gas emissions and are prepared to do even more including significantly increasing the share of renewable energy in our energy mix.

We have also recognized that opportunities exist in the transition to a low carbon or 'green' economy.

My Government has identified the pursuit of a green economy as a national priority and has taken concrete steps in this regard.

Independent estimates of the financing needed by developing countries to address climate change are a mere fraction of the trillions mobilized to stabilize

the global financial system over the past year, and a small percentage of total global GDP.

The UNDP has estimated that at least US\$86 billion per year will be required for adaptation in vulnerable developing countries.

This figure represents approximately one tenth of the military expenditure of developed countries.

There is no reason why a comprehensive adaptation financing package cannot be agreed to prior to Copenhagen.

Time is not on our side. The science clearly indicates that a narrow window of opportunity exists to prevent a disaster of unprecedented proportions.

As we contemplate our response to the climate crisis let us heed the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr:

“In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late...We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: Too late.”