



Statement on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) by  
H.E. Carlos Fuller, Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations, at  
the General Debate of the Ministerial Segment of the High-Level Political Forum  
on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

17 July 2023

Madam President, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the fourteen member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). At the outset, I convey CARICOM's full support for the statements delivered Cuba on behalf of the G77 and China, and by Samoa on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

This year holds great significance for CARICOM, as it marks both the midpoint of the 2030 agenda and the 50th anniversary of our regional integration movement, making it a pivotal moment for reflection, evaluation, and renewed commitment to regional development and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, while significant strides have been made since the adoption of the SDGs, we are acutely aware of the need for accelerated action to address the implementation shortfalls and stay on track towards achieving them in the remaining years.

**Excellencies,**

Fulfilling the SDGs is not merely an aspiration but a necessity for CARICOM. As a group of small, vulnerable and highly indebted economies, our region continues to be disproportionately affected by a myriad of interconnected challenges that require urgent and concerted attention.

First and foremost, enhancing climate action is paramount. Climate change remains the greatest existential threat to our region and the very survival of our people. We witness its destructive force firsthand, experiencing the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, including hurricanes and tropical storms,

encroachment of rising seas, and freshwater scarcity. These catastrophic events wreak havoc on our economy, infrastructure, and livelihoods.

It is important to emphasize that we as SIDS, who bear little responsibility for the climate crisis, have been forced to rely on our own limited resources to constantly rebuild and recover, diverting resources from critical sectors such as education and healthcare. Increased international support, through concrete and decisive actions to bridge the climate finance gap, is imperative.

We need a more inclusive and equitable international financial architecture that is responsive to our most pressing needs. This reform should prioritize the provision of accessible and affordable financing for sustainable development, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives, and to address loss and damage. CARICOM calls for the establishment of more flexible and innovative financial instruments, increased and predictable climate finance, debt relief, and improved access to concessional financing.

Let us put our words into action. We cannot afford to wait for leisurely progress or unfulfilled promises. If we are to truly achieve the goals, we must address the climate crisis now; this link is inseparable.

CARICOM eagerly awaits the finalization of the work on the MVI and its subsequent adoption, as well as the swift operationalization of a robust and adequately financed loss and damage fund. Further, as we reflect on the work completed under the Samoa Pathway and look forward to the upcoming 4th International SIDS Conference to be held in Antigua and Barbuda next year, we count on the international community's support to mobilize action and strengthen partnerships in pursuit of a prosperous future for all SIDS. We also welcome initiatives and proposals such as the Bridgetown Initiative and the SDG Stimulus which aim to offset challenging market conditions and address contemporary realities such as debt distress, debt solvency and debt risks.

**Excellencies,**

This year's HLPF has shed light on progress made and challenges encountered in the pursuit of SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17. As we reflect on the discussions held and the valuable insights provided by the VNRs presented, one resounding theme emerges: the importance of strong partnerships and cooperation, accurate and comprehensive data for evidence-based policy and decision making, and the transformative potential of science, technology and innovation in driving development across all spheres.

CARICOM congratulates its fellow members, Barbados, Guyana, and Saint Kitts and Nevis, on the presentation of their VNRs at this year's HLPF. Their VNRs not only offer a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by our region but serve as a testament of their commitment to accountability, transparency, and resilience in their unwavering pursuit of sustainable development.

### **Excellencies,**

If we are to achieve the SDGs within the remaining 7 years, bold and visionary actions that challenge the status quo, disrupt conventional systems, and foster innovation across all sectors are needed. We must enhance political will, redouble our efforts, establish strong accountability mechanisms, and continue to engage civil society, private sector, academia, and other stakeholders to ensure inclusive decision-making and implementation processes.

We urge all member states to honor their commitments. The situation is critical, and the repercussions of inaction are severe. Let us seize this moment to come together, strengthen our resolve, and take the necessary transformative actions for the betterment of people and planet.

I thank you.