

Jamaica calls for climate action to save small island states



Jamaican PM Andrew Holness, New York, Sept. 22, 2022. | Photo: Twitter/ @AndrewHolnessJM

United Nations, September 23 (RHC)-- At the United Nations, Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness stressed the need for climate action to ensure the survival of small island developing states (SIDS).

"Climate Change is an immediate existential threat for small island developing states like Jamaica," Holness said at the UN General Assembly, noting that a single climate event could wipe out 100 percent of the economy of a small island developing state in a few hours.

"Concerted action to slow down and halt global temperature rise is literally a question of our survival. While we will continue to develop our own resilience and play our part in mitigating climate change, we cannot, by our action alone, change the trajectory," he said.

"Jamaica looks forward to the convening of the UN Climate Change Conference in Egypt later this year. It calls on all countries to meet their commitments and contributions to climate targets, and calls on the

developed world to increase their commitments and ambitions in climate financing, particularly for adaptation and for loss and damage."

SIDS and some middle-income countries have particular vulnerability to climate shocks and external economic shocks, which have an oversized impact relative to their national budgets, and often crippling impact on their infrastructure.

For SIDS to survive economic shocks and recover damaged infrastructure, they are forced to borrow, only to be confronted again in a few years with another round of natural disasters, which could wipe out significant infrastructure and force them to add to their already high debt.

"Jamaica believes that a comprehensive and targeted approach to accessing development finance is needed," Holness said. "We eagerly anticipate an era of truly equitable access to concessional financing and other funding support which will enable us to invest in resilient infrastructure and create fiscal buffers so that we can withstand and recover quickly from the next economic, health or climate shock with little borrowing."

The prime minister warned that without the acknowledgment of vulnerability as a basis for access to finance, small island developing states will continue to struggle and will be unable to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

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