

Feature Remarks

Carlos Fuller, Permanent Representative of Belize to the United Nations

Caribbean Small States and the Diplomacies of Climate Change: Negotiations in Practice

Madam Chair,

Dr. Nand C. Bardouille, Manager of the Diplomatic Academy of the Caribbean,

Ms. Rueanna Haynes, International Climate Law and Governance Specialist,

Course participants in the Caribbean Small States and the Diplomacies of Climate Change: Negotiations in Practice.

I joined the arena of climate change diplomacy in 1990 following the adoption of the resolution to establish the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to elaborate a convention on climate change when the United Nations General Assembly. This was a new subject. In the 1960s and 1970s meteorologists had been concerned about the potential cooling of the atmosphere caused by the development and deployment of supersonic aircraft like the Concord flying in the stratosphere. A decade later the international community saw evidence of the exact opposite - warming of the atmosphere and the link with the observations from Mona Lau in Hawaii which had commenced in the 1950s showing an increase in the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

We were all new. The Caribbean was represented by seasoned diplomats, environmentalists, meteorologists, oceanographers. We each sent one delegate to the negotiations for many years. The agendas of the COP and its subsidiary bodies were small with no more than 8 agenda items in each. We now have three governing bodies and two subsidiary bodies serving them with more than 20 agenda items in each and several of these with 5 or 6 sub-agenda items.

Our level of representation has subsequently increased in the number of delegates, their levels of seniority and their expertise. However, most go into the negotiations with little formal exposure to the process. It is learning by doing.

I wish to congratulate the Diplomatic Academy for the initiative of this course. It is a step in the right direction to train up a new generation of Caribbean climate change negotiators equipped with the institutional memory of who and what has gone before them.

As I said to the class cohort in our roundtable discussion yesterday, it is small island developing states that are responsible for the creation of the UNFCCC. Just over 30 years ago we placed the critical issue of the climate crisis onto the global agenda, and since then, we have continued to drive the global discussion forward from the Kyoto Protocol to the Paris Agreement and beyond.

The multilateral process is certainly slow, unwieldy at times and even frustrating but we have still managed to secure some wins. We know now that we are quickly running out of time to turn the ship around on dangerous climate change and to prevent warming beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius. 2030 is fast approaching and the imperative to halve global emissions by that time is more urgent than ever. Small island developing states are up to the task. Programmes and initiatives such as this course ensure that our people will be equipped and ready for the fight ahead.

The course is also an important effort in the drive to ensure that Caribbean people become more aware of the pivotal role played by the region in the global climate discussion. I would like to congratulate all participants for the dedication and enthusiasm you have shown for this course. It has indeed been a pleasure to meet and interact with you all and I look forward to seeing you again in other roles in the future.

Thank you.