

**STATEMENT TO
THE WORLD LEADERS SUMMIT
United Nations Climate Change Conference
Conference of the Parties 26
BY
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FINAL DRAFT

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Your Excellencies:

This past summer at the Olympic Games, a young Bahamian woman AND a young Bahamian man out-ran the competition, to become Gold Medal Winners in their 400-metre races.

Our runners had the discipline and drive to work towards long-term goals.
Our runners had the courage and determination to overcome every obstacle.
And our runners had the ambition to believe that YES, they would succeed, despite the odds.

Colleagues, we must do the same, to ensure that this gathering succeeds in a way that the prior 25 such meetings did not.

We in The Bahamas will do what we can, but the limits of what our nation's effort can accomplish are stark:

We cannot out-run your carbon emissions;
We cannot out-run the hurricanes which are growing more powerful; and
We cannot out-run rising sea levels, as our islands disappear beneath the seas.

Hurricane Dorian, that monster Category 5 hurricane which devastated two of our main islands, feels like it descended upon us just yesterday.
We still don't know exactly how many died.
And some people still tremble at the first drop of rain.

But Every day, Our Yesterday is already becoming Your Today's - and fast-becoming all of our Tomorrows.

But today - TODAY - we can still do something!

As I said to the General Assembly of the United Nations in September:
You will only be safe when we are all safe!

We are out of time, colleagues.

A recent study declared that The Bahamas had the cleanest air in the world.
Other studies have shown that our distinctive, beautiful, aquamarine seas are a magnificent carbon sink.
Our seas reduce the amount of carbon in the atmosphere.

The Bahamas is not now and never has been the problem.
But yet we are forced to pay the price.

We are among the 'Top 10 Most-Vulnerable-Island-Nation States' in the world.

And the question I have for my colleagues today is:

Are we brave enough for this moment?

Are we braver than our predecessors, who led our nations at the previous 25 climate change meetings?

Can we summon the courage and ingenuity and determination to succeed, where they did not?

Promises and agreements are easy.

Action – specific and concrete policy changes – is a lot harder.

Action requires courage.

Every leader before us has postponed until Tomorrow what needed to happen Yesterday.

And now Tomorrow is here - Today! – and countries like mine are out of time.

Your support by financing and technology-transfer are needed urgently, so we can rebuild for resilience.

Without change - if we are lucky - we will become refugees.

Without change - if we are unlucky - then we will be left to the mercy of future Hurricane Dorian.

More of my people will die.

More will be left traumatized and homeless.

People will be forced to flee.....but flee to where?

These are my neighbours, my family, my friends.

My plea is both urgent and deeply personal.

And I make it on behalf of all humanity.

My Friends, look outside.

Our hurricanes are your fires and floods.

Our hurricanes are your landslides and drought.

Morally and ethically, it has to be beyond imagination and conscience, that we do so little, until it becomes too late.

Please:

Do what is needed, not what you can get away with!

Turn promises to Small Island Developing States into action.

Don't hide behind buzzwords and hazy assurances.

Don't let the failures of the past limit our ambition for the present.

Have the courage to acknowledge that failure today will lead directly to destruction for people the world over.

Like Bahamian Gold Medal Winners, Today, we still have the chance to win the race against time, and outrun the impact of climate change.

END