

**Delegation from
Barbados**

Position Paper for the United Nations Environment Assembly

The issues before the United Nations (UN) Environment Assembly (UNEA) are: Conservation and Restoration of Ecosystems in Urban Areas; Empowering Youth for Sustainable Development; and The Impact of Pollution on Marine Life. Barbados recognizes the need for strong multilateral cooperation to improve the quality of life of the current, without compromising that of future generations, and looks forward to addressing these issues at the upcoming conference.

I. Conservation and Restoration of Ecosystems in Urban Areas

Within two centuries the world's urban population increased from 2% to more than 50%. It is estimated, that by 2030 more than 60% of the world's citizens will live in urban areas. In 2011, the Caribbean reached third highest urbanization level of 79%. As stated by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in 2011 by only occupying 2% of earth's surface, urban areas concentrate 80% of economic output, up to 80% energy consumption and 75% of CO₂ emissions. Barbados acknowledges the economic potential of urbanization. However, Barbados is deeply conscious of the worrisome urban ecological footprint. The *Emerging and Sustainable Cities Initiative* states that between 1991 and 2013, cumulatively within the areas of Latin America and the Caribbean Islands, the urban footprint increased by 64%. Barbados is determined to follow recent trends of its population being able to take advantages of urban living.

Alarmed by latest observations showing that new urban corridors trigger uncontrolled urban sprawls, Barbados is deeply concerned that without proper guidelines the potential of urbanization cannot effectively serve the World Community. Noting the increasing degradation of the natural environment due to a lack of harmonized urban planning, Barbados reaffirms its commitment to its 2002 *National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan*, endorsed by the UN. As member to the 1992 *Convention on Biological Diversity* the country pledges its full support to the Agenda 21, as well as the implementation of the *Aichi Biodiversity Targets*. As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) of scarcity and high dependency on ecological services, Barbados seeks to preserve its natural heritage. Nevertheless, significant degradation of the marine habitat has occurred – critical to the tourism sector as well as for the local fishing industry. Bearing in mind the shared vulnerability of all oceanic and coastal states to natural disasters and climate change, Barbados calls upon this committee to fundamentally rethink urban planning, in terms of collective efforts following the principle of subsidiarity and inclusiveness.

Supporting UNEP's Goal to advance the preservation of ecosystems in urban areas to improve the quality and sustainability of cities, Barbados reaffirms its commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 11, 13 and 15. Since 1970, the nation has shown leadership by publishing an annual *National Physical Development Plan* (PDP), consistent of 54 policies, six community plans and a *National Park and Development Plan*. The PDP aims to promote sustainability, protect core assets and green the infrastructure. The 2016 *Barbados System of Parks and Open Spaces* is exemplary for the effectiveness of ecosystem-based approaches for natural heritage protection and environmental awareness. Internationally, the PDP remains a critical commitment as proven by the signing of the *COP21 Paris Agreement*, the *Habitat III New Urban Agenda* and the *UNESCO World Heritage* inscription. Barbados encourages the Global and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to further adopt integral PDPs. Barbados recommends the formulation of international standards applicable to national plans, and believes that increased efforts and assistance will further prevent disruption of ecosystems in urban areas.

II. Empowering Youth for Sustainable Development

The 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* guarantees the right to education, the freedom of expression and the right to participate. Youth, with 1.8 billion people, often faces denial of these basic human rights. Deeply concerned by climate change, governments have agreed to educate, empower and engage all stakeholder and major groups. This common objective is anchored in Article 6 of the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) and Article 10 (e) of the *Kyoto Protocol*. Over time the UN installed several opportunities of exchange and to encourage youth to participate in decision-making processes. Barbados considers inclusion of youth as premise for sustainable development and stresses that further progress must be made to ensure the future leaders and present change agents a voice at the table.

Guided by United Nation Security Council (UNSCR) resolution 2250 (2015) on *Youth, Peace and Security* Barbados underlines the importance of youth in the maintenance and promotion of international peace. Recalling

the Agenda 2030, inclusive societies without peace can under no circumstances be realized. Barbados endorses SDG 16 and the *World Programme of Action for Youth* to ensure inclusive and participatory decision-making at all levels. The UN aims to raise awareness on this issue by declaring the annual International Youth Day. Barbados is expressing its appreciation to the work of UNICEF, UNESCO and the UN Focal Point on Youth and reminds the Member States of their common vision as stated in GA resolution 66/288 (2012) on “The Future We Want” and the *World Youth report on Youth Civic Engagement*. Regionally and nationally, the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) seeks to strengthen sustainability and equality. Promoting SDG 8, Barbados emphasizes the creation of opportunity and employment in the green sector as integral assets to empower youth for change. Endorsing the value of national and regional youth networks and training facilities, Barbados trusts in further assistance to ensure the success of likewise measures.

Barbados expresses its support to the international community in taking action in the fields of education, training, public information, awareness and participation as well as partnership for youth empowerment. Barbados encourages Member States in continuing efforts on the community level. Emphasizing education and opportunity as key, Barbados urges Member States to formulate national strategies on Education for Sustainable Development, including capacity building of primary change agents. Barbados strongly recommends coordination between UNESCO and Member States in this concern. Barbados further supports the evaluation of replicable national and local approaches by UN coordination centers. Barbados further invites all Member States to join the PAGE in its efforts to empower youth by creating opportunities within the green economy sector. Expressing its appreciation to the continuing work of UN in enhancing participation and volunteering of youth at conferences and others, Barbados is confident that these initiatives will combat social exclusion of youth and increase effectiveness of sustainability in all twelve areas proclaimed by Agenda 2030.

III. The Impact of Pollution on Marine Life

Oceans are essential for human life in many different ways, thus ranging from it being a source of world’s food and drinking water to oxygen supply and with 40% of total annual emissions, the biggest absorber of Carbon Dioxide. Every nation, including those considered landlocked, are affected by the mounting consequences resulting in increasing pollution of waters. Taking into consideration that almost every threat that is opposed to the seas is man-made, including plastic-debris, solid waste, chemical runoff, improperly handled toxic waste, sewage and oil-spills. Waste, wastewater and storm water quality issues have had a significant impact on natural systems. The world has to deal with a wide range of problems due to land-based pollution, such as the disruption of the ecological function of coral reefs, noting the historical level of 10% coral cover degradation, the depletion of oxygen content as well as failures in reproductive systems of sea animals, that again crucially impacting human health and world hunger.

Barbados and the CARICOM as a whole, are strongly affected by current and future developments regarding oceans and marine life. Therefore, Barbados pledges its support to the Global Community and to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on all marine conservation issues, guided by the United Nations Convention On The Law Of The Sea (UNCLOS). Barbados acknowledges SDG 14 and GA resolution 64/292 stating that access to water and sanitation is a human right and therewith associated coastal resources are not only vital to human wealth, but also to environmental health. Approximately 1,000 tons of solid waste is generated per day across the island. To prevent further deterioration, Barbados endorsed the 1994 Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) on basis of GA resolution 47/189 and reminds the international community of their principles and commitments to sustainable development embodied in Agenda 21. Barbados urges the governments to constitute specific policies, actions and measures to be implemented at all levels. Nationally, the Barbadian Government established the Coastal Zone Management Unit (CZMU) in 1996 for the purpose of monitoring coral reefs and updating the coastal resources inventory. Barbados further emphasizes its commitment to the 2002 *Convention on Biodiversity* (CBD).

In terms of protecting marine life within and beyond its borders, Barbados believes that there is a need to seek for more attendance globally, concerning the threats that pollution is bringing to life in the oceans and, as a result, to the peoples. Therefore, the nation encourages CARICOM and the UN to widen public awareness upon this issue. Furthermore, Barbados stresses the importance of establishing a tax for plastic bags (1), this again being implemented by the nations’ governments in order to maximize the chances of success. To make this goal even more auspicious, Barbados further recommends using recyclable and reusable forms of plastic (2) as well as switching to alternative biodegradable materials (3), which do not harm marine animals and plants.