

Statement delivered by
His Excellency Indar WEIR
Minister of Agriculture and Food Security for Barbados
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Thank you Madam Chair,

Excellencies,

distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to participate in this conversation about water resources and water resource management, and how do we adapt and build resilience in the face of the most complex existential threat to mankind, climate change. The late great Bob Marley said and I quote “the greatest of a man is not in how much wealth he acquires but in his integrity and his ability to effect those around him positively”.

I bring to you today my views on where we are and how we shall proceed given the fact that I recognize that we are falling behind in our SDG targets particularly SDG2. It is of paramount importance that we recognize that the whole world face similar issues as it relates to water resource management. In listening to the McDougall lecture I was convinced more than ever that unless we put in the effort now at a time when we are particularly against the movement of the clock we shall find ourselves even further behind.

Our Sustainable Development Goals, SDG2 Zero Hunger, SDG3 Good Health and Well Being and SDG12 Responsible Consumption and Production are paramount in everything we do. The world food security must also embrace the SIDSs the LDCs, the LLDCs and we must be careful that in everything we do we do not leave them behind.

Above all in the global context you may recognize that these prolonged effects of climate change has given all of us similarities, prolonged droughts, prolonged floods and indeed limited rain falls to do rainfed agriculture. There is a need of course for us to respond. In responding to building resilience and making sure that all have adapted carefully we must also make sure that we do the things that would involve proper investments and proper spending in bringing about change.

Thirdly within a domestic context and what happens in Barbados, we are making all efforts to make sure we respond, adapt and build resilience. To this end we are recognizing that in the face of climate change there may very well be limited production of food at times. We also face good health care challenges, obesity NCDs and alike. Non Communicable Diseases will continue to effect not only Barbados but the world over. We must now seek to reduce NCDs, and also make sure that we produce healthy clean foods. This of course means reaching food sovereignty.

So, we are challenged to make sure we have food security, nutrition and food sovereignty. To reduce the costs of production Barbados is faced with reducing its food import bill. I believe we can do better and effort is being made at my Ministry to make sure we reduce our food import bill from USD 445 million by taking the first step by the year 2025 across an entire CARICOM effort to reduce the region's food import bill by 25 percent.

Barbados is listed among the 10 most water scarced country in the world. This in itself speaks to the challenge that we face. In an effort to make sure that we keep our farmers empowered and in franchise the Government of Barbados and through my Ministry sought to develop a water augmentation programme

that resulted in millions of dollars being spent across the entire country in rural Barbados and urban Barbados to make sure farmers have access to water through irrigation systems.

To this end we have developed reservoirs in water scarced areas so that farmers can have access to water on a daily basis. One such reservoir to the east of the Island has resulted in the Government spending USD 1.1 million in order for us to allow farmers on 60 acres of land to have access to irrigation water. We have also spent close to or USD 1.5 million at another location to the North of the Island, which will give us an opportunity to produce our own planting material by developing a state of the art orchard facility and at the same time building a reservoir to provide water. Equally we have started an urban project that allows for us to use technology and introduce new agrifood systems across the island, thus giving us opportunities for young people and females to participate.

Therefore we have started the farmers empowerment and in franchise drive is feed, which is deliberate, to hold farmers and help young people participate. I believe collectively we all can do it, we must move at pace.

I thank you.