



**United Nations Climate Change Conference  
Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom**

*Address by Hon. John Briceño  
Prime Minister of Belize*

Excellencies,

I'm here as a Belizean and as a global citizen to call for solidarity.

As a member of AOSIS, Belize is here to demand urgent action to combat climate change.

Climate change is the greatest challenge to humanity — devastating in its impacts on every aspect of our lives especially on those most vulnerable.

It is increasing poverty, eroding land and other resources of low-lying islands and coastal states, and threatening food security and livelihoods for hundreds of millions, and for generations yet to come.

Belize is the proud custodian of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System, the second largest reef system in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

But here is the sad reality.

The reef is under siege.

Coral bleaching stress doubled from 1.7 in the period 1985 to 2014 to severe level 3 between 2014 to 2017.

The reef is dying and may be beyond the point of full restoration.

Its loss will be irreversible.

For Belize, the Barrier Reef is more than a global beauty; it also underpins our culture and our tourism industry which contributes approximately 40 percent to our gross domestic product.

Without the reefs, Belize's economy could crumble.

Our people's lives will be forever changed.

Excellencies, the threat to our Barrier Reef is a direct result of human induced climate change.

That is an undeniable fact.

Belize is doing what it can to slow the impacts.

But we are struggling to respond as those impacts continue to accelerate.

Belize's annual average losses from extreme weather events are now approaching four percent of GDP.

Forced to accumulate an unsustainable debt load for disaster recoveries has become an unbearable cost.

We all know however that acting together, we can, and we must.

We have a collective duty to do what's right.

COP26 is a tipping point for climate action.

Belize is doing more than its fair share.

Belize is a net carbon sink.

Over 60 percent of our land has forest cover.

More than 40 percent of which is protected for conservation and biodiversity, while roughly 15 percent of our marine area is under protection.

Both on land and in the sea, we have exceeded conservation targets.

I am pleased to announce that Belize just entered a 360-million-dollar debt-for-marine conservation transaction.

The largest blue bond transaction ever.

And established a permanent \$100 million US marine conservation trust fund.

We will increase our marine protected biodiversity zones to 30 percent by 2026, four years ahead of target.

Belize is proud of our record on conservation.

But all will be lost, if the countries of the G20 obfuscate, and abdicate their responsibilities to act.

With right on our side, we demand climate justice.

We demand immediate action!  
Ambitious action to save our planet.

To date, NDCs of the major emitters are not in line with the objective of the Paris Agreement.

This places the world at risk of global warming close to three degrees.

These same countries account for three-quarters of global emissions and 80 percent of global GDP, they channel trillions of dollars towards fossil fuels, while developed countries shirk their commitment to deliver a bare minimum of 100 billion US dollars per annum.

This is rank negligence.  
We need to get serious.

Developed countries must not only deliver but increase their commitments on climate finance.

One hundred billion US dollars per year can only now serve as the baseline.

Talk of reducing and averting loss and damage must give way to dedicated financial, technical, and capacity building support to address actual loss and damage in developing countries.

Funding for adaptation must be dramatically increased.

At a minimum, developed countries need to more than double public finance for adaptation.

We need to move from carbon trading toward carbon emission reduction mechanisms with rules that apply to everyone.

For this to work, credits should only be generated from activities within Nationally Determined Contributions.

There should be no double counting of emission reduction credits, and a material share of proceeds should go to the Adaptation Fund, while a portion of credits canceled as a fundamental contribution to global emissions reductions.

Now, let's be clear.

Net zero by 2050 will not get the G20 off the hook from halving emissions by 2030, the former means nothing without the latter.

New 1.5 aligned NDCs must be delivered before any stock-take if we are going to make meaningful progress on Paris. Or more bluntly if we are going to save lives.

Mister President, the people of Belize and the developing world have heard enough talk, been disappointed by empty promises and are skeptical of pious pledges.

Every dollar my country invests in climate action, G20 countries undo multiple times over with the trillions they invest in oil, coal and gas.

Every step forward we make on development is easily reversed by the failure of G20 countries to act in line with the Paris promise of 1.5.

Belize is taking ambitious action. But there are some amongst us with a much bigger duty to act.

Mother Earth can wait no more, she can suffer no more, she is dying.

Mister President, the world is watching.

People are awaiting the outcomes of COP26.

This is the COP to stand with the vulnerable, to show you are for us not against us.

We all know what we need to do, we must summon the courage and moral strength to act.

None of us can afford to fail.

Thank you.