

**REMARKS BY**  
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**MINISTER OF WATER, LAND, ENVIRONMENT**  
**AND CLIMATE CHANGE**  
**AT THE**  
**CARIBBEAN AGRO METEOROLOGICAL INITIATIVE (CAMI)**  
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Salutations

First, I want to extend my heartfelt sympathy to the families who suffered from the effects of Hurricane Sandy here in the Caribbean and on the Eastern Seaboard of the United States.

Many persons lost their loved ones, their homes and their livelihoods.

In its wake, Hurricane Sandy resulted in a combined total of 71 deaths in the Caribbean, 54 of which occurred in Haiti, and left 72 persons dead in the North-Eastern United States. We are indeed grateful that more lives were not lost.

Many people have been dislocated by Sandy, and even today, some are still without the basic necessities of life namely food, water, electricity and shelter.

Former United States Vice President Al Gore, has noted and I quote... **“As human beings, we are vulnerable to confusing the unprecedented with the improbable. In our everyday experience, if something has never happened before, we are generally safe in assuming it is not going to happen in the future, but the exceptions can kill you and climate change is one of those exceptions.”**

The financial cost of this storm has been staggering, to say the least. Here in Jamaica, the Ministry of Agriculture has reported that the preliminary bill for the rehabilitation of the sector following Hurricane Sandy is J\$1.5 billion, while the Ministry of Education has put the damage to schools at approximately J\$170 million.

Preliminary estimates of the damage that was done to the North-Eastern Seaboard of the United States in the wake of the monster storm have been put as high as US\$50 billion. This figure ranks Sandy among the top five most destructive hurricanes on record and among the top two most costly storms to hit the United States, the first being Hurricane Katrina.

If there is a lesson in this it is that storms such as Sandy affect us all equally, no matter who we are, where we come from, and what we possess.

It is interesting to note, that despite all that has unfolded with Hurricane Sandy in recent weeks, few persons have mentioned Climate Change as the cause.

One who has made the link however, is the Mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg who, in his endorsement of Presidential incumbent Barack Obama, cited the importance of the President on Climate Change, particularly in the aftermath of the devastating blow to New York in the wake of the storm.

In an opinion article in Bloomberg News, the Mayor wrote... **“Our climate is changing....and while the increase in extreme weather we have experienced in New York City and around the world may or may not be the result of it, the risk that it might be - given this week's devastation - should compel all elected leaders to take immediate action”** endquote.

Here, in the most vulnerable part of the world, in Jamaica and the other small Island Developing States of the Caribbean, we cannot afford to pretend that Climate Change does not exist.

As Sandy has shown us, we can't run or hide from the effects of climate change. Indeed, as Australian musician, environmentalist, activist and politician Peter Garrett notes... **“Climate change is such a huge issue that it requires strong, concerted, consistent and enduring action by governments.”**

Despite all evidence to the contrary however, some experts are still referring to “hundred year” events, which are now occurring far more frequently. These ‘experts’ still have not accepted that something is happening to our climate that is causing the phenomena we are experiencing.

For example, during Sandy, for the first time, we saw a hurricane bring rain and snow to the United States. In fact, Sandy's snow output covered an enormous area.

All told, the storm dumped more than a foot of snow in Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Perhaps most unusual were the snow accumulations in the south-central Appalachians, including an incredible 22 inches in Newfound Gap which straddles the line between North Carolina and Tennessee.

Ladies and gentlemen, Climate Change is obviously a cross-cutting issue. It affects every sector, every country, every community, every neighborhood and every life on this planet.

My colleague Minister with responsibility for the Agriculture portfolio, Hon. Roger Clarke, will tell you that the Agriculture Sector is particularly vulnerable to its effects and in turn, this compromises our food security. This, if for no other reason, compels us not to turn a blind eye to the negative effects of Climate Change. In fact, we ignore it at our own peril.

Given the emerging data and circumstances however, we need to react positively instead of negatively. We must develop a sense of urgency towards, and prioritize Climate Change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Some unusual patterns are emerging. For example, we have the same annual rainfall but the distribution is different.

We have periods of extreme drought punctuated by very heavy rainfall that brings floods and the accompanying social, economic and health risks.

The bigger picture is that the advent of climate variability and change will cause more of these kinds of events, including late season storms, more droughts, more floods, and definitely more uncertainty to the planning and development processes, that are crucial to Small Island Developing States like ours.

We therefore have to devise means and methods to improve our adaptation. Climate change is everybody's business and it is one in which if you're not part of the solution, then you're part of the problem. That holds for countries as well as for individuals.

This is why initiatives such as the Caribbean Agro Meteorological Initiative (CAMI) project are so important. **The primary objective of the project, is to increase and sustain agricultural productivity at the farm level in Caribbean countries.**

It is my understanding that to date, the project has held several steering committee meetings, training sessions and workshops. It has also conducted analyses on rainfall and temperatures in the region aimed at fulfilling this objective.

The project provides information to farmers in the Caribbean via the regional network of Meteorological and Agricultural Services and research institutes on such matters as predictors of the rainy season potential; and the development of effective pest and disease forecasting systems for improved on-farm management decisions.

Through its communications component, the project prepares and disseminates a user-friendly weather and climate information newsletter. It also organizes forums with the farming community and agricultural extension agencies to promote a better understanding of the applications of weather and climate information, and to obtain feedback to provide better products from the meteorological services for use by the farming community.

Clearly, this timely programme can be of immeasurable benefit to farmers in the region.

I want to emphasize that the most successful projects are those that are sustainable. It is my hope that now that we have come to the end of the CAMI project, this conference will help to keep alive the key deliverables of the project. They include the information flow that will make farmers more aware of what they need to do to deal with climate issues, and the ongoing support that they will need to adapt their methods to suit the rapidly changing situation regarding climate change.

I note with interest that you have on the agenda, a presentation on drought assessment being done in Jamaica. I am delighted to learn that this assessment is being conducted by Dale Rankine, one of our young, talented nationals who participated in the CAMI project who as I understand, is now conducting key research and will in time, complete his PhD.

The work he is doing will certainly enhance adaptation planning, and Climate Change impact assessment in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean. In this sense, we are already making good use of the CAMI project.

In closing, I want to congratulate the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology and the 10 participating countries for working together in the best interests of regional agriculture, food safety and security.

I also want to congratulate my Ministerial colleague and his staff for recognizing the importance of Climate Change and its impacts on our future food security.

I want to assure everyone that despite being recently visited by Hurricane Sandy and enduring some setbacks in the wake of her wrath, this administration remains undaunted in realizing our Vision 2030 National Development Goals and are working assiduously to make Jamaica **“the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business.”**

Finally, let me again welcome all of you here today to Jamaica. They say **“it is better in the Bahamas, but I say it is best in Jamaica”**. We may be a little waterlogged from Sandy, but we are still sunny, even if it is only our dispositions.

I wish for you all, a productive conference. God bless you all.