



A L L I A N C E O F S M A L L I S L A N D S T A T E S

**Statement by  
Gaston Browne Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda  
At “Summit of 40 Leaders” on Climate Change  
Organized by the  
President of the United States of America Joseph Biden**

22 – 23 April 2021

President Biden,

I thank you for convening this very important gathering to address the most significant threat facing our one planet and our one humanity.

We are grateful that the United States and China have pledged to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and we look forward to swift action in their transitioning into carbon neutral economies.

We urge other major emitting nations to follow this vital example set by the United States and China.

We remind that the 44 members of the Alliance of Small Island States, through no fault of their own, confront the greatest threats of Climate Change.

The 44 AOSIS members, are the least contributors to greenhouse gas emissions.

Collectively, they emit just 1.5 percent of the emissions of industrialized nations, and many of them have already begun to roll out ambitious programmes to reduce their small carbon footprint, particularly in renewable energy.

They made ambitious national commitments at COP 21 in Paris and they remain passionately committed to implementing them within their means.

However, the harmful effects of Climate Change are growing, and the cost of mitigation and recovery is being counted in human lives and livelihoods.

The economic situation of our countries was already grave before the COVID-19 pandemic. It is now dire, particularly for tourism dependent nations.

We are literally teetering on the edge of despair.



Over the years, the debt of small states has risen to unsustainable levels, because of repeated borrowings to rebuild and recover from continuous debilitation by natural disasters, arising from climate change.

Mechanisms, introduced by International Financial Institutions (IFIs), for addressing the looming debt crisis are insufficient.

For some small states, even these inadequate instruments are denied, because of the false criterion of middle and high per capita income which ignores the huge vulnerabilities that small states face.

It is urgent that policy makers of the IFIs, instruct that more determining criteria of small size, resource constraints and vulnerabilities, be taken fully into account for concessional financing.

Colleagues, repayment of official debt by small states, including to the Paris Club, is near impossible in the prevailing parlous circumstances.

A permanent solution to the looming debt crisis is compelling and necessary.

This requires action to design new and enhanced financial instruments and to provide debt relief, including debt cancellation, debt suspension, debt rescheduling, debt restructuring and debt-for-climate swaps.

Worsening Climate conditions are uprooting workers from previously productive sectors and causing a crisis of emigration and refugees. This, too, must be reversed in the global interest.

We should acknowledge the interconnectedness of human civilisation; that small states are also markets, providing revenues and employment for larger and richer nations.

Every major country benefits perennially from trade surpluses with small states.

To continue to be viable markets, to remain viable democracies, to uphold human rights and the rule of law; and to provide economic conditions that discourage refugees, we need the following:

- Urgent access to COVID-19 vaccines, which should be prioritised based on vulnerability.
- Immediate action to cut greenhouse gas emissions.
- A programme of debt forgiveness and debt rescheduling
- Concessional financing that takes account of vulnerabilities and,
- Funding to compensate for damage, to help reconstruct our economies and to assist in building resilience.

It is our hope that a spirit of cooperation will emerge from this gathering of 40 that can be taken to Glasgow, to inspire a programme of action for small states at COP26.

Thank you.

