



PRESS RELEASE

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### **Environmental Destruction is the "Biggest Threat" to World Security, says PM Davis**

NASSAU, THE BAHAMAS - A "triple planetary crisis" threatens world security and requires countries to "ramp up efforts to promote sustainable land management at home and abroad, according to Prime Minister of The Bahamas the Hon. Philip E. Davis. He called for Caribbean countries to convene as "brothers and sisters" and as "political leaders and environmental champions" as the Pre-COP 16 Conference got underway at the SLS Bahamar Conference Centre, August 8, 2024.

The triple crisis involves addressing climate change; protecting biodiversity; and nurturing ecological restoration of the land, which PM Davis called "an urgent priority for us all".

He called on Caribbean leaders to speak with "hearts and minds in harmony" on the international stage in matters of climate change and desertification - the main topic of the Pre-COP 16.

Noting that 30% of degraded land in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) worldwide can be found in the Caribbean region, PM Davis said Caribbean countries cannot "recklessly clear land or extract resources, turn a blind eye to unplanned urbanisation, or promote harmful farming practices that undermine, rather than improve, our food security".

The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the world's foremost platform where governments, businesses and civil society come together to discuss present-day challenges and chart a sustainable future for land. UNCCD is one of the three major treaties known as the Rio Conventions— alongside climate change and biodiversity. Desertification is the process by which natural or human causes reduce the biological productivity of drylands. This greatly affects biodiversity and food security, and is exacerbated by natural disasters such as hurricanes and tropical storms, which adversely affect the Caribbean region.

Hosted by the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources, this preliminary event will set the stage for Caribbean nations at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Pre-Conference of the Parties (COP) 16. COP 16 will take place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, December 2-13, 2024.

Minister of the Environment Hon. Vaughn P. Miller said it was imperative for Caribbean nations to "harmonize our policies" and "unify our voices", speaking with "one voice" on the world stage.

"Mutual respect, shared responsibility and a steadfast commitment to safeguarding our environment are necessary," Minister Miller told colleagues during the Pre-COP16 opening ceremony.

"We must be our brothers' and sisters' keepers. It is our duty to look out for each other, share resources and insights, and create a more sustainable future for us all."

The Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM) is an intergovernmental agency committed to supporting Caribbean Small Island Developing States in meeting their environmental mandates, particularly in the areas of land and soil management. It is the unifying body for the Caribbean as it relates to the UNCCD Convention.

Ministers of Government, National Focal Points, and Government officials throughout the Caribbean are attending Pre-COP 16, including: Hon. Alfred Prospere, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food Security and Rural Development, Government of St. Lucia, Chair of the Pre-Cop 16 Meeting; Hon. Anthony Smith, Minister of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries, and the Blue Economy, Antigua and Barbuda, along with Permanent Secretary Sandra Jospeh; Hon. Adrian R. Forde, M.P. Minister of Environment and National Beautification, Green and Blue Economy, Barbados, along with Permanent Secretary Yolande Howard and Technical officer Steve Devonish; Edgar Hunter, Senior Technical Advisor, Ministry of the Environment, Rural Modernisation, Kalinago Upliftment and Constituency Empowerment, Dominica; Sherilita Dore-Tyson, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Sustainable Development, St. Kitts & Nevis; Ritesh Sardjoe, Permanent Secretary of the Directorate of Environment, Ministry of Spatial Planning and Environment, Suriname; Julius Smith, Environmental Specialist, Ministry of Planning and Development, Trinidad and Tobago; Keith Philippe, National Correspondent to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization; and Calvin James, Executive Director of the Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM). Attending via Zoom are: Astrel Joseph, Director General, Ministry of Environment, Haiti; Joseph Noel, Land Use Officer, Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, Fisheries and Cooperatives, Grenada; Enrique Monize, Commissioner/ CEO, Lands and Surveys Commission, Guyana; Kareem Sabir and Shaun Baugh, CARICOM; and Chamberlain Emmanuel and Cornelius Isaac, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)

The Pre-COP 16 Meeting 2024 is being hosted by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MENR) Forestry Department, and its Director, Danielle Hanek, who serves as the

National Focal Point for the UNCCD. PISLM is involved in two specific projects in The Bahamas. One project is the Integrated Landscape Management for Addressing Land Degradation, Food Security and Climate Resilience Challenges in The Bahamas. Under this project, the PISLM is assisting the Bahamas to develop its Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme. PISLM is also in the beginning stages of the Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT). The Department of Environmental Planning and Protection, MENR is responsible for CBIT, a program to build the capacity in The Bahamas to track emissions and the country's responses to mitigate climate change.

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***About the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MENR), Commonwealth of The Bahamas:***

*MENR provides for the prevention or control of pollution, the regulation of activities, and the administration, conservation and sustainable use of the environment; and for connected purposes.*

*The Ministry consists of four areas - Department of Environmental Planning and Protection (DEPP); Department of Forestry; Department of Environmental Health Services (DEHS); and the Bahamas National Geographic Information System Centre (BNGIS).*

*Led by: Hon. Vaughn P. Miller, Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources; Hon. Zane Lightbourne, Minister of State for the Environment; and Mr. David Davis, Permanent Secretary.*

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