

STATEMENT

BY

MS. JULIETTE BABB-RILEY

SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF BARBADOS

AT THE

**SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE TO SUPPORT THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL
14: CONSERVE AND SUSTAINABLY USE THE OCEANS, SEAS
AND MARINE RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

JUNE 2022

Mr. President,

At the outset, the Government of Barbados wishes to congratulate the Governments of Kenya and Portugal for successfully co-hosting the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference.

Perhaps Barbadian poet, the late Frank Collymore, was writing for my region, in anticipation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, and this Conference, when he penned the words:

***Like all who live on small islands
I must always be remembering the sea
Being always cognisant of her presence;
Viewing her thro apertures in the foliage;
Hearing when the wind is from the south, her music,
and smelling the warm rankness of her,
Tasting and feeling her kisses on bright sun-bathed days,
I must always be remembering the sea..... "***

This Conference and Goal 14 urge us to act in protection of the oceans, to use marine resources in a manner that ensures the sustainability of ocean ecosystems, for those who depend on the sea for their way of life and livelihoods. As island inhabitants, our evolution and development are marked, recorded and determined by the Ocean that surround us. Many of our parents, who grew up

separated from the plantation by a single generation, were fed almost exclusively from the Ocean, when there was little else to eat.

Our migratory paths have been charted by the Ocean, first by the dehumanising slave trade, which forced our entrance into the New World, then by the emigration of our forefathers to Panama, the United Kingdom and the United States, in a quest to create better opportunities for themselves and the families they left behind.

It is noteworthy that the IDB has estimated that the Ocean generates revenues of US \$407 billion for the Caribbean through shipping taxes, tourism, fisheries and related marine ecosystems services. As an island nation which had one of the first Ministries of the Blue Economy in the world, Barbados understands well, the challenge of creating policy which maximises the nexus and potential between the blue and green economies, balancing recreation and competing uses with an eye to the Ocean as the new frontier for sustainable development.

Mr. President, small states, like Barbados, must have the legal and technical capacity to fully manage the resources in their exclusive economic zones and extended continental shelf. In the case of SIDS, maritime space often far exceeds terrestrial space. By way of example, Barbados has a land mass of 166 square miles or 432

square kilometres, but exercises jurisdiction over maritime space that is several hundreds of times the size of its land area. It is important that SIDS should be recognised and some value ascribed to the carbon sinks provided by their maritime territories. We therefore laud the evolving opportunities and provisions for an ambitious BBNJ framework which will enhance scientific research, understanding and management of marine resources globally and within national jurisdictions.

The society, economy and environment in SIDS are also being severely impacted by climate change. Adequate financial resources are required to address the development challenges which the climate crisis poses to the marine environment of islands. Our oceans and coastlines are synonymous with the national security of island states. The global family should commit to monitoring, control and surveillance as it relates to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing which encroaches on our EEZ and decimates fish stocks.

The CARICOM region is also ripe for a collaboration with a global centre of scientific research, to investigate *inter alia* the viable and beneficial applications for the pervasive Sargassum seaweed, from biofuels to cosmetics. This would convert what is now a nuisance on beaches across the Caribbeanà causing litter, foul odour, affecting marine life, smothering coral reefs, bothering nationals

and tourists alike to a resource and value-added product from which the region can create jobs and earn foreign exchange. On the matter of waste to resource, hundreds of fish skins are thrown away in regional fishing markets daily. Barbados is working at converting these fish skins into leathers.

Moreover, Barbados is developing robust policy to address these and related challenges. The National Roofs to Reefs Programme (R2RP) is an integrated management tool for reducing marine pollution by addressing multiple sectors including transport, waste, water, energy and agriculture by taking a theoretical drop of water from the time it hits a house-holder's roof as rain and tracing its path and impact until it reaches the ocean where it will meet the reefs.

We are also working with the national fishing fleet, which was previously transformed from day boats to ice boats, thereby increasing capacity and earning, to now use renewable energy instead of diesel as a fuel source. Additionally, we are exploring the possibility of debt for nature swaps, and introducing renewable energy and greater energy efficiency at national fish markets.

Mr. President,

Barbados is pleased that the IDB has started discussions on the modalities for the operationalisation of blue bonds and how they can generate capital for blue economy investment, income and protection for sustainability, especially in SIDS which are highly vulnerable.

As with climate change, SIDS feel the state of the oceans first and keenest. Barbados is therefore committed to doing its part to protect our Ocean in furtherance of SDG 14.

Mr. President, the Ocean is, quite literally, the life-blood of the planet, connecting and nourishing the human family. At this Conference, we the members of the human family must ask ourselves the very serious question whether we will give our Ocean the transfusion it critically and urgently needs. To that question, Barbados answers an unequivocal yes.

I thank you.