



*Permanent Mission
of Barbados to
the United Nations*



**Statement to be delivered by the
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Transport,
Works and Water Resources and Leader
of Government Business**

The Honourable Santia J. O. Bradshaw, M.P.

at the

**United Nations Conference on the Midterm
Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the
Objectives of the International Decade for Action,
“Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028**

March 22, 2023

9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Mr. President,
Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Permit me to join those who have spoken before me in expressing my appreciation to the Netherlands and Tajikistan for taking the lead in convening this most important event.

The last time we came together as a global community to chart a common path forward for water, in 1977, in Mar del Plata, I was just one year old.

Today, I represent Barbados at this conference as Deputy Prime Minister because for my country, like for all of our countries, water and its management has come to occupy a central part on our collective road to sustainable development.

Barbados is classified as a water scarce country with a per capita water availability of 306 cubic meters per year. Close to 80% of its water supply

is derived from low lying coastal aquifers of thin freshwater lenses floating on top of saltwater. However, despite these limitations, the island has a water supply network dating back to 1856, with almost 99% coverage. The quality of the water supply meets the World Health Organization's Drinking water guidelines with the island has adopted as its drinking water standards.

With almost 98 percent of the groundwater resources fully developed and with the more frequent occurrences of droughts, the island has started to experience some water supply issues in the high elevation areas of the island as well as a rise in salinity levels in the coastal aquifers.

The projected climate change impacts of reduced rainfall, frequent droughts, rising sea level and increasing temperatures are therefore seen as major threats to the island's wellbeing.

Recognizing these threats and the island's vulnerability, we have undertaken several actions aimed at mitigation, adaptation and building resilience of water and wastewater systems.

1. Augmentation of the water supply through desalination of brackish and seawater (23%). (PPP arrangement).
2. Strategic mains replacement program to replace and rehabilitate the ageing infrastructure to reduce the level of non-revenue water (averaging at (40%)), frequency of bursts and disruptions in service.

However, only about 5% of the 2,500km has been replaced so far. Funding has been received from the Inter-American Development Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, the Latin American Development Bank and the European Investment Bank.

3. Planned upgrades of the two existing municipal wastewater treatment plants to tertiary level with the intention of reusing the reclaimed water for irrigation and groundwater recharge. This has been facilitated through approval of a Water Reuse Policy and the soon to be passed Water Reuse Act. US\$39Million grant has been received from the Global Climate Fund (GCF) to upgrade one of the Plants
4. A Greening Initiative has been conceptualized to increase the resilience and stability of water supply systems to the impacts of

climate change while maintaining the required service delivery standards that increases resilience at the household level.

The project is comprised of two (2) sub-programmes :-

- a. The Personal Tank Programme which provides personal/Household water storage tank systems to vulnerable persons in areas that are subject to intermittent water shortages
 - b. The Country-wide Water Saving Devices Programme which targets efficient water use at the household level and focuses on raising awareness of the need for conservation at the national level on how to combat serious impacts of climate change on our dwindling water sources.
5. The Roofs to Reefs Programme (R2RP). This is a holistic, integrated national initiative for the resilient development of Barbados. It provides for a response at the individual, community and country levels. It is an integrated public investment programme founded on principles of sustainable development and climate change resilience and represents the development model for Barbados for the next decade. The R2RP provides the overarching framework that allows the integrated approach to addressing activities under

all of the key action sectors as a response to the impacts of Climate Change that affect all economic sectors.

6. Rehabilitation of water supply Infrastructure (reservoirs and pumping station buildings) to withstand at least category 3 Hurricanes.
7. Installation of photovoltaic systems to mitigate CO₂ emissions. This has been done with the support of the United Arab Emirates and the Global Climate Fund. 1.93 Megawatts has been installed and 5.1 Megawatts is currently being installed.
8. Rainwater Harvesting, Storage and Reuse Policy - Including the updating of National Plumbing Code to allow for a dual plumbing system and development of water reuse standards and regulations.

As you can see there is a lot to do, a lot being done and a lot still remains to be done. This has been exacerbated by climate change, the challenging international economic environment and lack of access to adequate financing.

Despite these challenges, I am pleased to say that Barbados has been making progress with regard to the attainment of SDG 6.

For example, Barbados has achieved a score of over 99% in respect of SDGs 6.1.1 and 6.2.1, namely Access to Safe Drinking Water and Access to Sanitation and Hygiene and Wastewater management. There is full access to treated drinking water and access to proper drinking water and wastewater services in all schools and health institutions and there is no common open defecation.

But to achieve this level of implementation, Barbados has had to spend a disproportionate amount of its national income to just to stay current. Given the potential impact of the climate crisis on the Caribbean region, maintaining this level of implementation can itself become unsustainable without technical and financial support.

Over 80% of our drinking water resources are related to a shallow coastal aquifer that is heavily influenced by the sea and is very responsive to sea level rise and drought.

These are two key factors of climate change challenge. This is a key vulnerability Barbados faces in the management of its water resources as it strives to keep track of the SDG 6 targets.

Mr. President,

My country recently introduced some wide-ranging proposals regarding the reform of the international financial system. We have called it the Bridgetown Initiative and it has been piloted by our Prime Minister, the Honourable Mia Amor Mottley who launched it last year here in New York.

The goal of the initiative - and others like it - is to ensure that developing countries that most need it are able to obtain the right quantity and type of financing in order to achieve the SDG's. Agreeing on policy objectives is important – finding the finances to implement the policy is essential.

The Bridgetown Initiative is structured around three key elements:-

The first involves changing the terms around how funding is made available. The aim is to stop developing nations spiralling into a debt

crisis when their borrowing is forced up by successive disasters like floods, droughts and storms.

The second involves multilateral financial institutions and development banks to make available an additional \$1 trillion to developing countries for climate resilience. This should include discounted lending focused on “building climate resilience in climate-vulnerable countries”.

The third involves setting up new mechanisms – with private-sector backing – to fund climate mitigation and reconstruction after climate disasters.

Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Small Island Developing States like mine grapple with the vagaries of climate change compounded by a myriad of other challenges.

If we are to achieve clean water and sanitation and ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all an instrument like the Bridgetown Initiative establishes a solid framework which can chart a successful path for the way forward.