

**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
CAVE HILL CAMPUS**

Remarks

**Environmental Seminar co-hosted by Sophia University (Japan),
the Embassy of Japan and The University of the West Indies**

September 19, 2017

PROTOCOL: Good morning and welcome

I think I should add KONNICHIIWA (kon-neechee-wuh) to properly acknowledge our Japanese colleagues and friends who have joined us today.

I am indeed delighted that The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill campus has partnered with the Embassy of Japan; the Japanese Association for Promotion of International Cooperation (APIC) and Sophia University to host this seminar. This cooperation signals an important development in what we at Cave Hill are attempting to achieve, as we seek to further internationalise our university. I welcome and thank our Japanese partners for joining us on this academic journey and look forward to even closer collaboration in the years ahead.

I also wish to thank my colleagues in CERMES for their part in facilitating and coordinating this morning's seminar. In so doing, they are helping us to demonstrate to our wider community that whenever there are matters of regional or even global concern, such as climate change, which, we are examining today, that the University should be at the forefront providing guidance and facilitating the sharing of expert knowledge.

Universities, as institutions of advanced learning, have to be engaged in the **search for solutions** to all problems facing humanity, whether local, regional or international. I am informed that you have already enjoyed a most

informative and interactive session yesterday, in spite of the inclement weather on the vital **role of research partnerships in promoting sustainable development** I know I speak for this campus' entire research community when I say that at Cave Hill we welcome any presentation or discussion which embodies a search for solutions to this region's developmental challenges. Indeed, the relentless pursuit of solutions to revitalize Caribbean development continues to be one of our core mandates as a community of committed scholars. This morning's seminar examines the **environmental challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss** that now endanger the lives and livelihood of millions of Caribbean citizens. We are very conscious, I am very conscious that this morning's seminar is not stereotypical academic exercise. All across the Caribbean, Mexico and the Southern parts of the United States we are witnessing the effects of extreme weather patterns, and I want to pause the recognize the loss of lives, physical, financial and psychological damage visited upon the region in the last two weeks.

His Excellency, Mr Shinada, and Ambassador Ken Shimanouchi will be pleased to note that the internationalisation agenda which I mentioned earlier is embedded in our 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. It energises and propels our efforts to position the University of the West Indies as a flourishing, **excellent global university rooted in the Caribbean**. So the Cave Hill Campus stands ready and willing to strengthen our partnership not only with Sophia University, with whom we have already established a Memorandum of Understanding, but also the wider Japanese community, in many areas of academic and enterprising collaborations. Our efforts at consolidation in the East complement our growing reputation that is being forged in the West as we continue on our quest for acknowledged excellence and global recognition.

On a most educational and enlightening visit to Japan in June, facilitated by the Embassy of Japan in Barbados, and hosted by APIC, I established a number of promising relationships that hold much potential for further cooperation at varying levels. Some existing ones have already started to bear

fruit. Only last month, for example, this campus hosted lecturer and film studies expert Mr. Mitsuteru Takahashi. Mr Takahashi is an associate professor at the Digital Hollywood University in Japan and I have already begun discussions with him about the possibility of him returning as a visiting professor in film studies attached to the Errol Barrow Centre for Creative Imagination. Mr Takahashi introduced an enthusiastic local audience gathered across the street at the EBCCI, to Anime, the hugely popular and lucrative Japanese art form in their film industry. Currently Japan has around 600 animation production companies in their growing industry that generates around US\$16 billion annually. Mr. Takahashi's visit was sponsored by APIC and coordinated by the Embassy of Japan in Barbados. He is very interested in returning and so we are anticipating this. In addition, in collaboration with the Institute for Gender and Development Studies: Nita Barrow Unit, the campus is pursuing hosting Professor Emiko Ochiai of Kyoto University who is recognized as an expert scholar in fertility studies. She coordinates The Global Centre of Excellence programmes at Kyoto University and we are excited about the possibility for cooperation and joint research between the IGDS: NBU and Kyoto University. These types of collaborations underscore the international thrust of the UWI, Cave Hill Campus and the willingness of prestigious universities to partner with us.

I wish return to the troubling issue of climate change, a global phenomenon which affects the archipelago of islands, off the coast of Asia that constitute Japan, as much as it commands our own undivided attention in this Caribbean archipelago. We know only too well that Small Island Developing States (SIDS), are especially vulnerable to climate change while simultaneously grappling with inequalities that hamper our socio-economic development.

There is no scientific disagreement on the relationship between climate change and hurricanes. I am a social rather than natural scientist but I understand the concept that rising sea temperatures create favourable conditions for more intense and dangerous storms. And it is a fact that sea temperatures have

risen, many say, due to global warming. In spite of 2016 being the hottest year on record ever, climate change skeptics and deniers would have us believe that any causal link to adverse weather conditions is at best tenuous. The formation of Irma as the first Category Five Hurricane ever to form in the Atlantic Ocean and the destruction it has wrought says otherwise. This constitutes a serious wake-up call for all in this region.

Both Japan and the Caribbean share a common danger of devastation from storms and the need to protect their territories from the weather-related disasters which they pose. Although Japan is not numbered among the world's Small Island Developing States (SIDS), it has demonstrated an understanding of the plight of these nations and a commitment to help alleviate the dangers of climate change. We welcome and express gratitude for that support. One such manifestation of this support was Japan's establishment two years ago - along with Austria, Denmark and Sweden - of a United Nation mechanism to assist in financing climate change adaptation towards transforming these nations into low carbon economies. And while it may be argued that Japan's level of susceptibility to storm-related destruction is far less severe than the Caribbean's, the fact remains that climate change poses grave dangers for both archipelagos.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is quite fortuitous that we are hosting this seminar so soon after the world has witnessed the devastation inflicted on this region this month by Hurricane Irma. And we pray that any further destruction from Maria will be at a minimum.

Almost every year, it seems that the Caribbean is seeing the development and passage of storms with an escalating intensity. These environmental hazards threaten the lives of millions who live here and occasionally wreak havoc on our territories leaving in their wake stark human suffering and loss on a scale that was hitherto unimaginable. We are still in shock at the stark images which

led to the abandonment of an entire sister island - Barbuda- which has to be rebuilt.

Over the years, the Centre for Resource Management and Environment Studies, CERMES has done an excellent job in raising awareness about coastal conservation as well as marine degradation, including plastic pollution and its impact on the turtle species. CERMES has shared expert knowledge and educated the public about threats to the region's biodiversity and the endangerment of our fish stocks. Dr Cashman, I must commend you, Dr Cumberbatch, Professor Oxenford, and your other colleagues for the sterling work done by CERMES in relation to the influx of Sargassum seaweed which recently overwhelmed our coasts and threatened some of our vital economic sectors including tourism and fisheries. Your commendable work on the Sargassum influx has produced a comprehensive report on how to manage this environmental hazard which I have shared with the governments of each Caribbean territory.

Surpassing other environmental dangers that affect our ecosystems and our way of life, climate change threatens our very existence as a Caribbean civilisation. We are facing a crisis which requires solutions that will test our spirit and resolve. We know that CERMES, perhaps utilizing cross-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary lens, will have to lead in shaping our perspectives and sharpen our focus on this.

Beyond ensuring adherence to building codes to enhance property resilience, and engineering procedures to prevent coastal erosion, coastal and inland flooding and other technical solutions, the region must lift its voice against industrialised practices which persist to the detriment of small nations who contribute minimally to the problem and are powerless to halt its advance.

Within the academy, I will ensure that the issue of climate change and bio diversity loss remain at the forefront our deliberations and considerations for public awareness so as to maintain greater harmony with our environment.

This could see the introduction of a green week, a green month or even a green semester in which sustainable development practices are relentlessly pursued within our own space.

Ladies and gentlemen, once again I welcome you to the Cave Hill campus and I wish you a stimulating and rewarding seminar on a subject which is impatient of discussion.

I thank you.

Professor V. Eudine Barriteau

September 19, 2017