CVF Leaders Meeting on a New Era of Accountability:
An Adaptation Package, Debt Solutions, and Health Resilience for Vulnerable Nations

24 September 2025, 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM (EDT)
Conference Room 12, UN Headquarters, New York City

This is a very busy week, and we therefore do not take it for granted that you are here, nor shall we hopefully cause you to be here longer than you need to. It is my honor, therefore, to welcome you.

Your presence here recognizes that in spite of all of the doubts that are being cast on why we are coming together, that there is in fact, still an urgency of the moment. We can no longer debate whether climate extremes are real. Most people here have experienced some variation of that extreme and unpredictable climate, and hence, why we have banded together as climate-vulnerable countries.

Despite the cautions of the scientists, the planet has already been at 1.5°C for an extended period, with continued emissions mocking our efforts to hold to the Paris temperature limits. So the question is, what is next? Do we ignore reality, or do we continue on a path to certain destruction?

The numbers of climate-driven refugees are increasing each and every year, and climate-caused diseases are equally rampant. We know from the WHO that the link between climate and health is real, and we made that determination when we met at COP28 in Dubai. Those who are also working outdoors are at extreme risk, and we need to start talking about the habitability of regions, and in some instances, entire countries where extreme heat and humidity will pass biologically. Tolerance thresholds and rising waters are also, we know, an issue, and that is why gatherings like this are not optional, but in fact, are absolutely necessary.

When we meet, we need to make sure that our meetings achieve substantive decisions and progress. Seville, the Fourth International Conference on Finance and Development, normalized the number of things in our lexicon that were viewed as innovative and new. I refer specifically to debt swaps, I refer specifically to natural disaster clauses—things that people were not prepared to have a discussion on.

We, in Barbados, can speak to you definitively. We went to the market two months ago and did an international bond raise of US$500 million that included natural disaster clauses, in addition to the World Bank agreeing last year to make natural disaster clauses available for loans to the small island developing states. These things are no longer novel, but it is up to all of us here to insist and to stand in solidarity with each other, to mainstream them and to get more countries to include them in their bilateral instruments.

As we go forward, we know that you cannot separate development and climate, people and planet, and there are two sides of the same coin. We now have the opinions from both the Inter-American Court on Human Rights and the International Court of Justice that further affirm that climate action is not just a political priority or a moral duty, it is now a binding legal obligation. Failure to act is a violation of international law that will naturally attract both compensation and reparation, based on the decision of the ICJ given in the last two months. This, my friends, should strengthen our resolve. While science has long told us what is at stake, we not only now have a moral reason, but we have a legal imperative to uphold, to help cope with the escalating crisis.

We require a fivefold increase in financial flows for adaptation, development, and nature protection. You know, it seems as though some words drop in and out of our lexicon—one has been adaptation and resilience. It is almost as if it is treason to refer to adaptation and resilience in this current environment. It cannot be, because this is a mechanism by which our people will survive in my own country. We are not asking others to do it for us alone.

We have, this year, established a Regeneration and Resilience Fund, which the government has committed to put 0.35% of GDP every year in that fund—while having all employees, all self-employed persons, and all employers equally contribute to that fund. My friends, therefore, we recognize that when we say we should scale up from US$90 billion to US$500 billion a year, we are doing so with moral authority. First of domestic resource mobilization, while then asking others to bridge the gap for the damages and losses that are not at our instance, but as a result of their behavior. This comes, of course, at a time when everybody is concentrating on defense budgets and fiscal difficulties, and therefore, innovation will be critical for us if we are to see and bridge the gap.

One of the things that I want to raise this morning is also the question of: how do we put together, globally, a global methane agreement to mitigate where we are. The reality is that all of us know that methane is 80 times more dangerous than carbon, but it only lasts in the atmosphere for 12 to 15 years. Carbon lasts for centuries. The scientists have advised us clearly, and we met with them again this week, that if we can stop the flow of methane and we have the capacity to monitor it globally; if we can stop or reduce to almost zero the flow of methane, then we have the potential to reverse temperatures by half of one degree.

The science also shows that when you decarbonize, you also are likely to have increased heat for the first decade, and therefore you need an offsetting mechanism. Methane control can be that offsetting mechanism. What does it do? It allows us to meet common position with those who don't believe in the climate crisis. The enemy is not the fossil fuel industry. The enemy is the emissions flowing from the fossil fuel industry. There are already examples where persons recognize that to flare gas is to burn money, to fail to fix leaking pipes is to lose money. And therefore, while they can take actions that will enhance their balance sheets, those actions will also secure the planet from the negative effects of methane. It is a win-win situation, and what is required now is for us to engage in a laser-like manner with those entities who can make the difference, not only relying on countries, but engaging directly with the private sector.

Similarly, we have to find a way to be able to transition farmers, because we know that both livestock farming and rice-paddy farming also contribute significantly to methane production. This one is a little more complex because unlike the oil and gas sector who have the capital base to make transitions, the farming sector, invariably, in most countries, does not have that capital base. We will have to consider how we help them access the technologies that are available in order to make the transition. And of course, we have to modify how we manage waste. There is a global example. It was the Montreal Protocol, 30 years ago, when we decided that we wanted to be able to deal with the ozone layer and the HFCs. In truth and in fact, there was a legal agreement, and the world has been successful in its objective, then it shows that we can be successful again. There was a voluntary path at COP28 in Dubai. We need to move from a voluntary path to legal agreement. Why does this help the oil and gas sector, in particular? Because if the enemy is not the sector but the emissions, then it buys them time as well to be able to do the research, to have the decarbonizing technology applicable at commercial scale. It also helps those countries in the Global South who have been told that they have to abandon any hopes of any kind of execution or participation within the fossil fuel sector, and therefore be denied the right to help finance their way to net zero.

This, my friends, I believe, ought to be a major area of solidarity for the V20 group. In addition to this area of the global methane agreement, we have been working quietly with health experts to see how we can identify one or two projects that can help all countries with respect to our preparation for adapting to the new realities of climate while protecting our healthcare systems.

There are two things, and remember, we said we cannot separate people and the planet. One of them relates to information that we would like to circulate on climate-related health infrastructure, being able to build resilience so as a guide for each country, and it is up to each country, whether they accept, use, or ignore that. The second one relates to how we keep our populations healthy while relying on them to be major agents in the building of resilience against climate. The recommendations related to how we treat the chronic NCDs, in particular, high blood pressure, therefore becomes key in that. We hope, in working with health experts, to be able to circulate those guidance notes to countries over the course in the next few months.

In addition to that, we want to be able to ensure that we work to help the Fund for Loss and Damage be able to amplify the resources which they have access to. Regrettably, the commitments are still less than US$1 billion. I don't need to tell anyone in this room that, that can be wiped out in one or two disasters; and to that extent, therefore, let this not be a Pyrrhic victory for the Global South, but we need to continue to make the point that there has to be the financing of this fund if we are able to insulate the experience of losses in those countries, that are on the frontline.

The other area that is not here that will require our consideration and consultation is the insurance sector in this country, the United States of America. Insurance companies have already taken decisions to withdraw insurance for wildfire risk. In California, you saw the implications of it with the wildfires that took place in January in Los Angeles and surrounding areas that wreak havoc. They have also seen here a withdrawal of insurance for flood and hurricanes in certain parts of the Southeast of the United States of America, Florida, and surrounding states. And of course, the implications have extended into the Northern Caribbean, and elsewhere.

In some instances, insurance is not being available. In other instances, insurance is becoming unaffordable. When regions, sectors, or countries become uninsurable, they become uninvestable. The modern financial system is based on insurance as a mechanism to be able to ensure that investments and transactions can be de-risked. It is, therefore, important that we get ahead of the curve and begin to understand how the movements and developments in the insurance industry will have implications for the microeconomy in our countries.

If you own a guest house or a small hotel, you have to refurbish regularly. If at the end of the day you go to borrow money to refurbish, one of the covenants from the banking system will be insurance. If the cost of insurance on an annual basis is now unaffordable, then you have a vicious cycle ensuring that you can't do that, which is necessary to increase your average daily rates, but at the same time, you equally are exposed to the elements for five or six months a year for those who live in hurricane zones.

So my friends, when we take into consideration that we have seen some progress, not the kind of full progress that we want, but some progress, then I hope that this will be impetus enough for us to take this grouping seriously. This is one of the few groupings that crosses geographical regions. This is one of the few groupings that crosses the size of countries. We have a common interest, but I sense that we are not using it sufficiently, nor are we working in a singular fashion to be able to shape policy and to put pressure both on the public and private sector.

It is up to us to use the areas of debt, debt reform, climate and health to our advantage, because it, in fact, constitutes a large part of what our respective governments have to deal with in order to: one, become resilient; two, protect our populations; and three, navigate our way through this very difficult international environment where persons are seeking to be able to divide, but do not have the capacity to stop the negative impact of climate, because as we talk, the events are still continuing and affecting countries.

I hope that the consultation today can build the solidarity that is necessary for the Secretariat to be able to be even more effective in what we are doing to move the needle across the global community and across the policy making for the world. Thank you very much.

I want to thank the Secretariat, in particular, for holding things together in between. I want to thank the Secretary General, and I want to thank Ambassador Thompson, who is my Sherpa, for also holding this together and allowing us to make substantive progress. But the rest of the progress that we make is not at the instance of the Secretariat anymore. It is at the instance of the political will of countries to want to make a difference and to act in solidarity as we go forward.

Thank you.

H.E. MIA AMOR MOTTLEY, S.C., M.P.
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