



**GOVERNMENT OF ST. KITTS AND NEVIS**  
**STATEMENT**  
**PRESENTED BY**  
**THE HON. DR. JOYELLE CLARKE**  
**MINISTER OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE**  
**ACTION AND CONSTITUENCY EMPOWERMENT**  
**ON THE OCCASION OF THE**  
**7<sup>TH</sup> GEF ASSEMBLY**  
**VANCOUVER, CANADA**  
**AUGUST 22-26, 2023**

The Honorable Ahmed Hussien, Minister of International Development and Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change; Mr. Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of the Global Environment Facility; Excellencies, colleagues.;. On behalf of the Government and people of St. Kitts and Nevis I extend appreciation to the Government and people of Canada, the City of Vancouver and of course the indigenous keepers of this unceded land for the hospitality and warmth extended to the Delegates of the GEF fraternity. As we meet, floods and fires continue to devastate and destroy lives and livelihoods, even right here in the beautiful province of British Columbia. On behalf of the government and people of St. Kitts and Nevis, I register sentiments of solidarity. This loud bicoastal fire alarm we are witnessing in Canada is a gut-wrenching reminder of our common vulnerabilities and the necessity for us to work together to reverse this ruinous crisis. Canada has walked with St. Kitts and Nevis since our day of independence forty years ago, and as we pay tribute to this ever-growing partnership, we view this GEF gathering as an opportunity to tighten our bonds of friendship to battle together the scourge and scars of the climate crisis. Our work at this defining moment calls for a vision of co-building sustainable and resilient states - anchored on future-proofing our shared communities and countries. We

also acknowledge Mr. Carlos Manuel Rodriguez for his stewardship of this particularly important global partner in environmental management and sustainable development, who commenced his tenure at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the words of Thomas Kohntopp, an Industrial-Organizational Psychologist and Educator, “In calm waters many captains are able. It is in a tempest when true leadership emerges.” We can all attest that our Chairperson/CEO has proven himself to be ready to face any challenge that emerges. St. Kitts and Nevis uses this opportunity to thank him for his support and ongoing engagement with the Large Ocean Small Island Developing States (SIDS), of which we are a part. He continues to emphasize the unique characteristics and challenges that face our countries as we pursue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), our commitments outlined in the Paris Agreement, the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), the National Determined Contributions (NDCs) and national development plans.

This Assembly convenes as we embark on our individual journeys of post-COVID-19 recovery, fueled by a shared optimism to fortify our resilience. Our united resolve is tested by the looming specter of the climate crisis, a challenge so profound that July 2023 marked the hottest month ever documented for our planet in the annals of data collection. As we navigate these critical junctures, we are called to forge a path of unwavering commitment and enduring investment in safeguarding our future. Notwithstanding the limits placed on us as a global community over the past three (3) years the GEF successfully completed the GEF-8 replenishment negotiations with a total pledge of US\$5.33 billion, an increase of 30% when compared to the outcome of the GEF-7 replenishment process. A vital outcome of this replenishment includes the establishment of a new floor in the System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) for Caribbean Large Ocean SIDS from US\$4.0 million to US\$8.0 million. The scaling up of the Integrated Programmes (IPs) and the reform of the Small

Grants Programme (SGP) further illustrate the commitment of the GEF to support a transformational and impactful recovery based on lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. I use this opportunity to thank the GEF for allowing the Large Ocean SIDS of the Caribbean, Pacific and Africa to have their own negotiator in the person of Ms. Caroline Eugene who served as a Political and Operational Focal Point on behalf of the Government of St. Lucia. Her experience allowed her to be a passionate advocate on behalf of all Large Ocean SIDS during the negotiations.

In August 2022 the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis commenced efforts to further ensure the holistic and resilient development of its communities. This undertaking is articulated in our Sustainable Island State (SIS) Development Agenda which is buttressed by five pillars; food security; green energy transition; economic diversification; sustainable industries and the orange economy; and COVID-19 recovery and social protection. These overarching areas include environmental sustainability; sustainable lives and livelihoods; health and wellness; and fiscal and debt resilience. The theme of the 7<sup>th</sup> GEF Assembly, “Healthy Planet Healthy People” aligns with the objectives within the SIS Development Agenda. As a Large Ocean SIDS environmental health is inextricably linked with the health and wellness of our people. The relentless ascent of the Earth's temperature reverberates, casting its monumental influence not solely upon terrestrial existence, but delving deep into the aquatic realms. Should this unyielding trajectory persist unabated, the cherished existence and sustenance of our populace, intricately woven into the tapestry of diverse life forms that define our distinctiveness, shall hang in the balance. Our modest expanse, vulnerable to the crescendo of fierce natural tempests like hurricanes, coupled with our dependence on markets perched far from our island abodes, intricately embroiders the canvas of climate challenges. The price of enacting imperative interventions stands magnified against this complex backdrop. St. Kitts and Nevis commends

the approval of the programming directions for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Fund at the 64<sup>th</sup> GEF Council Meeting and look forward to its ratification at this Assembly. The Fund will support the protection and regeneration of our biodiversity, inclusive of our marine biodiversity, which for Large Ocean SIDS, accounts for more than 95% of our jurisdictions. We extend profound appreciation to the GEF donor countries for their unwavering support to Large Ocean SIDS and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) during the negotiation process regarding access to a higher proportion of the anticipated financing accessible to GEF recipient countries.

Colleagues, the year 2030 is fast approaching and there remains much work to be done in our collective effort to have transformational change through the achievement of the SDGs. This requires continued dialogue and alignment of objectives and financing. The GEF has recognized the need for these important steps evidenced by its provision of grant resources to its recipient countries and its ongoing relations with the executives of the environmental conventions and other international institutions such as the Adaptation Fund (AF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the UN Forum on Forests and the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. Although we commend the engagement, increased effort is needed to fully address resource mobilization in a manner that does not further compound the cycle of indebtedness which is a prevailing risk to the creation of a resilient environmental, economic, and social development landscape in Large Ocean SIDS, particularly within the Caribbean region. Over successive GEF programming cycles, St. Kitts and Nevis has strategically invested our STAR resources in the development of three (3) national and two (2) sub-national projects. Support has also been provided to our national GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP). These resources have been complemented by domestic and additional external financing to achieve global benefits through national and grassroots interventions. Amidst our challenges, St. Kitts and

Nevis advocates not just for unique financial tools to ease debt, but for integrating the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) to tailor resource allocation. Increased grants and concessional lending will empower women, communities, youth, persons with disabilities, and indigenous peoples.

As we stand on the cusp of an arduous journey, St. Kitts and Nevis stands unwavering in its mission to forge a future as a thriving, sustainable Large Ocean Small Island State. In this noble pursuit, we call on the GEF and the rest of the global community to join us as we convene the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference of SIDS in Antigua and Barbuda in 2024 and as we seek an ambitious and equitable outcome in Abu Dhabi for COP28. It is our hope that this forum will foster greater understanding and support. In the words of Li Jinhua, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, “... we must remember that the problems that SIDS face today are the ones that the rest of the world must confront tomorrow.”

Thank you.