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Remarks Delivered by
Mr. Cleviston Haynes, Governor, Central Bank of Barbados
at the
44th Sir Winston Scott Memorial Lecture
Frank Collymore Hall
Monday, November 25, 2019

Welcome to the 44th Sir Winston Scott Memorial Lecture, "Human Life is Not Negotiable: Why We Must Act Now on Climate Change."

We are very pleased to have Mr. Giza Gaspar Martins, the former Chair of the Least Developed Countries Group that negotiated the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as our lecturer this evening.

Mr. Martins, on behalf of all of us here tonight, welcome to the Bank, and welcome to Barbados.

I also want to recognise representatives of the Scott family. Thank you for allowing us to honour the life and work of your patriarch, our first native Governor General, Sir Arleigh Winston Scott, and for supporting this event throughout its almost four and half decades by your frequent attendance.

This lecture series was the brainchild of the Bank's first governor, Sir Courtney Blackman. From his earliest days in office, Sir Courtney was firm in his belief that the Central Bank of Barbados should be a part of, and not apart from the community it serves.

And so, with its inception in 1976, just four years after the Bank was established, the Sir Winston Scott Memorial Lecture became an early example of our commitment to stewardship not only on matters related to the economy, but also on culture, education, and thought leadership.

One of the unique aspects of this lecture, and perhaps an element that has contributed to it being the longest running lecture series in Barbados, is the breadth of the topics it has covered throughout its lifetime.

Our speakers have included poets, priests, economists – of course – and even someone who has looked down on the earth from space.

In just the last 10 years, topics have ranged from healthcare to entrepreneurship, to human rights to the very meaning of political independence.

While we have covered a wide array of themes, one consistent element has been their relevance to Barbados and to the lives of Barbadians. Our goal is to add value and to enhance the public discourse on matters of national and international import. We have therefore always sought out speakers who are leaders in their fields, and whose viewpoints are backed by expertise and experience.

We are confident that this year's lecture, and its presenter, will add to this legacy.

Tonight will be the third occasion on which our lecture will have the environment as its central focus. In 1994, the late Barbadian renewable energy pioneer, Dr. Oliver Headley, advocated passionately for a shift away from fossil fuels, and in 2004, renowned environmentalist, Dr. David Suzuki, warned that we were in the "59th minute" with regard to our ability to avoid a climate crisis.

Environmental degradation has been a recurring theme in this lecture series, both as the central focus and as part of broader topics, because it is an ever-looming threat to all of us who share this earth. And for us in the Caribbean, we are confronted with the reality that as small island states, and tourism dependent nations, we are particularly vulnerable to the ravages of climate change.

The effects of climate change come with a high economic cost, no doubt. That's why in restructuring our local and international debt, Barbados built in a climate change clause. That clause allows us to freeze our debt servicing for two years if a natural disaster strikes, giving us some wiggle room and helping us to better manage our debt in a crisis situation.

Like small island states, lower income countries will be disproportionately affected as long as this crisis continues. Therefore, Mr. Martins, as the former chair of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) group, feels the same sense of urgency that we in the Caribbean do.

He also understands the grave paradox of the climate change: that the countries most affected by it have very little leverage or influence when it comes to determining policies to combat it.

Nevertheless, he has been steadfast. In 2015, he represented the LDC group, which included countries in Africa and Asia as well as Pacific island nations and our regional neighbour, Haiti, at COP 21 in Paris. He spearheaded the bloc's negotiations, sitting across from countries with bigger delegations, better resources, and more clout.

His team fought for and obtained a key inclusion in the Paris Agreement, the goal of limiting the global average increase in temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

This limit was critical to protect the populations of many of the nations in the LDC group, and Mr. Martins believes, as the title of tonight's lecture states, that "Human Life is Not Negotiable."

We are indeed privileged to have Mr. Martins as our speaker this evening. I would like to personally express my gratitude to him for accepting the invitation at such short notice. He readily accepted even as he is in the midst of preparing to lobby on behalf of his country,

Angola, at another important climate forum, COP 25, which takes place in Madrid, starting just one week from today. This certainly is testimony to the passion and commitment he has for this topic, and his willingness to spread the word at every opportunity.

I therefore encourage you to take full advantage of his presence, and urge you to listen closely as he shares not only what needs to be done, but also how we can accomplish it. The stakes are simply too high for us not to.

I thank you.