



OFFICE OF THE
PREMIER
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

Message for World Environment Day 2021

By Premier and Minister for Sustainability and Climate Resiliency Hon. Wayne Panton, JP, MP

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What do you want for the future of your children in Cayman? And how do we ensure that future?

John Paul II once said, “The Earth will not continue to offer its harvest, except with faithful stewardship. We cannot say we love the land and then take steps to destroy it for use by future generations.”

We must all take actions that inspire confidence in a better future and one that heals the damage humans have put on the environment – this is in perfect harmony with the theme for World Environment Day 2021: Ecosystem Restoration.

The world needs urgent and renewed commitment to take the necessary steps to restore and protect the life-supporting systems of our planet. By creating the new Ministry of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency my government has signaled its clear intention to focus on developing programmes and policies that will give life to the affirmations contained in our Constitution to be “a country that manages growth and maintains prosperity, while protecting its social and natural environment” and “a country that respects, protects and defends its environment and natural resources as the basis of its existence”. In so doing, we will provide opportunities for the Caymanian public to play their part by:

- Safeguarding the biodiversity of all three Islands and ensuring the sustainability of our ecosystems through the expansion of protected areas; Managing the risks associated with climate change through targeted strategies, which help us to adapt to the impacts and address the causes of climate change;
- Creating a space for the government to work with all citizens on innovative ways to enhance the quality of their lives while ensuring the long-term viability of the country’s natural systems on which we all depend;
- Promoting food security and ensuring the sustainability of local agricultural practices;
- Facilitating the country's transition to a green economy, including meeting our goals for renewable energy and embracing appropriate green technology.

My Government recognises that this work is now urgent, especially in relation to our response to climate change.

The impact of climate change is a frightening prospect, especially for small islands like ours. I know that there are still some who deny that climate change is real, but the science is clear: the climate is changing and the change is due to human activity.

However, there is an increasing global awareness and sense of hope, and it is our responsibility, individually and collectively, to be a part of the solution. We must take timely action to reduce our contribution of greenhouse gases, however small in global terms our contribution might be, and ensure that all our decisions increase our collective ability to adapt and enhance our resilience to the inevitable impacts of a changing climate.

We must invest, as a government and people, in our inventors and innovators to ensure we help lead the world in protecting the environment from these disasters. Our country has been slow to respond but our young people have begun to demand we do better, including the many young people in our community who are involved in environmental activism through Protect Our Future, the National Trust for the Cayman Islands, and the Mangrove Rangers, to name but a few avenues for action. Our young people recognise that humanity is facing an existential crisis arising from climate change and that it is they who will inherit this fragile earth. I encourage our youth to keep raising their own voices – we hear you!

Embracing sustainability and making good on the promise that each new generation should be able to build a better future is a fundamental principle of my government.

The people of the Cayman Islands have survived off the land and sea for all of our history. We have always understood that we in the present are the trustees who are charged with protecting and improving what we have been so fortunate to inherit from those who have gone before us.

And it is our responsibility to pass on that inheritance to the next generation. People from every continent are dreaming of coming to our shores again to enjoy these beautiful landscapes and crystal-clear seas, which have supported thousands of jobs in tourism and our way of life to date.

Other industries that draw directly on our environment, such as agriculture and fishing, continue to support our economy.

The environment is something so deeply personal to each of us. When we have time to get closer to our natural environment we will always find that it is like medicine for our physical and mental health and for our emotional and spiritual wellbeing. This is a wondrous thing that we are all bound to protect.

In the words of former United States First Lady and environmentalist Lady Bird Johnson, “The environment is where we all meet; where we all have a mutual interest; it is the one thing all of us share.”

I pray we all become leaders in this endeavour.

In conclusion, I want to reassure the country that as your Premier and Minister for Sustainability and Climate Resiliency I take this duty and responsibility very seriously and I am proud to put my hands to work for a cause that is so critical to the future prosperity, and indeed survival, of our country.

May God Bless these beautiful Islands.

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