



SEGUNDO EJERCICIO

INTERPRETACIÓN INGLÉS-CASTELLANO

PERFIL: 7

18 de junio

Remarks by President General Assembly H.E Dennis Francis on “Strengthening climate action: The role of the United Nations General Assembly in addressing sea-level rise and other climate-induced disasters”

At Florida State University, Turnbull Conference Center, Tallahassee, Florida
August 29, 2024

Students and Faculty of Florida State University,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Without any doubt, tertiary institutions like FSU play a crucial role as society’s great developers and liberators of human potential – advancing public understanding, shaping societies, and building our collective future.

That future – and what we must do, together, to secure it – is what I intend to speak to you today about. A transformative future brimming with boundless potential – and one that is propelled by remarkable and rapidly evolving innovations and revolutions that are constantly upgrading and unleashing our human potential and redefining what is possible.

Alongside the boundless potential, the reality is that it is also a future fraught with profound risks and uncertainties. Risks that we must fully grasp and address – immediately – in order to ensure humanity’s continued well-being.

While there are numerous other pressing global issues – including internal conflicts, ongoing aggression against sovereign countries like Ukraine, and escalating violence worldwide in places like Haiti and Sudan – as you have asked me, today’s lecture focuses on one of the most formidable risks we face.

Climate change – a deepening major challenge that is existential.



It brings a slew of interrelated effects – many spanning borders and all affecting successive generations.

Our actions today will determine not only the average global temperatures. What we do or do not do will heavily influence weather patterns, biodiversity, the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, agricultural output and food security. Importantly – if we do not seriously re-examine the way we live i.e. our habits and lifestyles – that will even dictate whether entire ways of life will continue to sustainably thrive and thus determine our own survival.

Living up to the promise of the Paris Agreement by honouring those commitments and pledges is our best hope for staving off the worst of the impacts – and, more importantly, keeping global temperature rise below the 1.5-degree pre-industrial limit.

It is a goal close to my heart – quite literally – I have taken to wearing a lapel pin advocating atmospheric temperature increase of “1.5 degrees”, well before assuming the Presidency. And it is a goal we must all set ourselves to urgently achieve.

Dear Friends,

Sea-level rise, global warming, and proliferating disasters – including hurricanes and floods, caused by climate change – can no longer be spoken of as abstract looming dangers. They are present realities unfolding before our very eyes.

In 2024 alone – for the first time ever – global warming breached the 1.5-degree limit for an entire year. Extreme weather events caused by warming air and ocean temperatures, once rare, could become annual occurrences – affecting close to 1 billion people living in low-lying coastal areas.

As Floridians, you too know that climate change is not a “tomorrow problem”. Just recall how recently Hurricane Debby – which made landfall not far from here – left a path of massive destruction in its wake, from Florida to the Carolinas. It was another stark reminder of how torrential rains can trigger flash flooding and storm surges.

Nearly 40 percent of Americans live along the coasts – where sinking land only adds to the threat of sea-level rise. For the populations of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and other low-lying coastal zones – including my own home country in the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago – no issue is more pressing or consequential than sea-level rise.

In coastal States from Brazil to India, sea-level rise could abruptly force millions of people to relocate – creating new population flows and intensifying competition for



already scarce resources. The cascading effects extend beyond these immediate impacts – influencing regional stability, economic vitality, and international relations.

Friends – on a broader level – we need to maintain an unrelenting and uncompromising devotion to the truth. To succeed, we need a full-on global coordinated effort – in particular, to push back against the rampant misinformation and disinformation campaigns maliciously spread by those who seek to cast doubt on obvious science-based realities relevant to addressing climate change.

And we know very well that this pattern of denial is not new. Just as the tobacco industry once manipulated or outright rejected scientific evidence linking smoking to cancer – today we see similar tactics motivated by self-interest. These campaigns do more than just mislead the public. They undermine effective policymaking, delay the adoption of sustainable practices, and compromise international efforts – including on many occasions causing disunity among countries at the United Nations itself – on efforts to address climate change, global warming, and sea-level rise. It is imperative, therefore, that we confront these falsehoods with facts and informed discourse – to ensure that policy decisions are informed by science and evidence.

Dear Friends,

As I conclude, let me emphasize that as academics, you too bear a particular moral responsibility to challenge mistruths, distortions, and outright lies – and to promote the irrefutable facts of science to the general public. It is crucial to ensure that people are properly informed and aware of the real dangers to empower them to make natural decisions about their individual lives and that of their communities. Moreover, as young people, the next generation of global leaders, your support is vital in driving decisive action on climate change. I know many of you are passionate and have innovative ideas – and I wish you Godspeed in your endeavours and look forward to learning about your contributions.

With this, I eagerly anticipate learning of your insights on what action we can take to stabilize our climate and drive further progress across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – our blueprint for achieving peace, progress, prosperity and sustainability for all, everywhere.

I thank you.