



*Premier of Bermuda*

**Ministerial Statement**  
To The House of Assembly

By

**The Hon. L Craig Cannonier, JP, MP**  
Premier of Bermuda

**Hamilton Declaration**

Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 2014

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**Thank you, Mr. Speaker**

**Mr. Speaker**

I rise today to inform this Honourable House of the historic signing of the **Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea.**

**Mr. Speaker**

You will recall that I recently advised this Honourable House that I would soon sign the Hamilton Declaration. I am now pleased to advise that on Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> March, at the Rosewood Tucker's Point Resort, ten Governments and five International Organizations joined Bermuda to affirm their commitment to protect the Sargasso Sea. Bermuda was joined by representatives from the Azores, the Bahamas, the British Virgin Islands, Monaco, the Netherlands, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Turks and Caicos Islands, Sweden, and South Africa. In addition, representatives from the Convention on Migratory Species, the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles, the International Sea Bed Authority, the International Union of the Conservation of Nature, and the OSPAR Commission also were in attendance.

**Mr. Speaker**

This effort has been driven by the Sargasso Sea Alliance, a partnership led by the Government of Bermuda, in collaboration with scientists, international marine conservation groups and private donors, who all share a vision of protecting the unique and vulnerable ocean ecosystem of the Sargasso Sea.

The Sargasso Sea is a unique marine ecosystem in the north of the Western Mid Atlantic Ocean. It is the only sea without a coast, for the *sargassum* algae from which it gets its name is held in place by the currents of the North Atlantic, concentrating it into large mats and windrows around the islands of Bermuda. Spreading over more than 4 million square kilometers, the Sargasso Sea provides shelter and nutrition to large numbers of threatened and endangered species including sea turtles and also to commercially important species such as tunas and billfish. It is the only spawning place in the world for the American and the endangered European eel.

Bermuda has for decades demonstrated its leadership in ocean conservation, and our leadership of the Sargasso Sea Alliance and our work to bring other Governments and international bodies together to create a means to protect high seas beyond national jurisdictions furthers our legacy in this regard.

**Mr. Speaker**

It is appropriate for me to acknowledge at this stage the work of the former Government, who oversaw this initiative from its infancy, and who laid the foundation for the success that we have now experienced.

**Mr. Speaker**

The creation of the Alliance, and the signing of this Declaration stands as a unique testament, as it has successfully drawn together nations and organizations in a voluntary collaborative manner to protect a special High Seas Area Beyond National Jurisdictions, without the force of a convention, or treaty or legislation, and funded entirely by private donors who share a common

vision. It is our hope that the model established in Bermuda will be replicated by other bodies for the protection of other High Seas areas.

The Declaration was signed by Bermuda, the Azores, Monaco, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. The other attending nations will sign over time. I am pleased to confirm that the Declaration does not in any way impact Bermuda's authority over and its ability to manage our own Exclusive Economic Zone. We like every other nation, retain the right to sustain ably manage the resources of our waters.

**Mr. Speaker**

The work does not conclude with this momentous signing. Indeed, the real work is perhaps about to begin. To oversee the commitments affirmed at the Signing Ceremony, a Sargasso Sea Commission will be established in Bermuda. The Commission will be composed of distinguished scientists and other persons of international repute committed to the conservation of high seas ecosystems, who would serve in their personal capacity. It is anticipated that the Commission will be comprised of five members, appointed by the Premier of Bermuda, following consultation with the parties. At least one of the five Commissioners will be Bermuda-based. The Commission is expected to meet virtually, and like the Sargasso Sea Alliance, be funded by private donors.

**Mr. Speaker**

It is instructive to note comments from the Secretary-General of CARICOM in response to our invitation to attend the ceremonies and sign the Declaration. The Secretary-General was not able to attend because the date of the Signing Ceremony coincided with those of the Twenty-fifth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community.

The Secretary-General stated:

" ... the CARICOM Secretariat considers this initiative to be both laudable and timely. As you are no doubt aware, there is recognition at the international level of the importance of the

sustainable use of ocean resources to Small Island Developing States (SIDS). This issue is increasingly recognized by the international community as being of great significance ... The Sargasso Sea Alliance being initiated by your Government is a very positive initiative for the Region and will go a long way towards building partnerships and synergies to allow the Region to fulfill its commitments under the various international agreements.

"In light of the foregoing, the Secretariat would be pleased to collaborate in the proposed virtual Sargasso Sea Commission and to exchange experiences and best practices emerging out of the Alliance.

"I applaud the leadership role which Bermuda is playing in this most worthy initiative and extend best wishes for a highly successful Ceremony."

**Mr. Speaker**

The signing of the Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea has focused positive worldwide attention on Bermuda. Our leadership in marine stewardship is thus firmly established.

**Thank you, Mr. Speaker**