

Richard Branson Wants to Make the Caribbean a “Climate-Smart Zone”



Sir Richard Branson and Usain Bolt at the launch event in Kingston.
By the Caribbean Journal staff

Adapting to climate change — and being ready for the next storms when they come — isn’t just a priority for the Caribbean. It’s a necessity. That’s why a new regional initiative is looking not just to make the Caribbean prepared for future hurricanes, but to make the region resilient — and quickly. And Sir Richard Branson, long one of the Caribbean’s leading advocates for climate resilience and [for the region in general](#), is leading the way. Branson this week was on hand in Kingston to announce a new initiative aimed at making the Caribbean the world’s first-ever “climate-smart zone.”



It’s called the Caribbean Climate-Smart Accelerator, and it’s what organizers call an “entrepreneurial engine” that will focus on implementing climate solutions for resilience, green

energy, the development of sustainable cities, oceans and transportation. Already, 26 Caribbean countries have signed on to the drive, supported by 40 private-sector companies. The Accelerator has three primary areas of focus: **disaster preparedness, recovery and resilience**; investing in low-carbon development and “breaking down barriers to climate-smart growth.” “Less than a year ago, many parts of the Caribbean were hit by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the space of a few weeks. While many Caribbean islanders lost everything, I’ve lived in these parts long enough to know that very few would lose their spirit,” Branson said at the launch event. “The Caribbean spirit is a formidable thing, and I never had any doubt that Caribbean people would bounce back, not by simply returning to business as usual, but by forcefully rejecting the idea that destruction and suffering will be the new normal. From the depths of disaster emerged a new narrative, a story of hope, resilience and opportunity. **Let’s build a clean and resilient Caribbean, together.**” Sprinting superstar and Jamaica native Usain Bolt was also on hand for the launch, announcing the “Accelerator Speed Award,” which will challenge countries to lead the way toward a climate smart zone. The Inter-American Development Bank has already announced \$1 billion in low-cost funding for such Caribbean resilience projects, while several climate-smart projects have already begun in the region, from a \$50 million climate-smart water project to a \$300 million plan to bring Grenada the world’s first climate-smart city. “I look forward to helping to bring the Accelerator to life as a spark of hope for island nations all over the world,” Branson said. For more, visit the Caribbean Accelerator.

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