

Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez Remarks
Southeast Florida Climate Leadership Summit
October 1, 2014



Good morning everyone...

It's always a pleasure to share the stage with Mayor Philip Levine here in the City of Miami Beach.

South Beach is one of the most recognizable areas in the entire world, and it's a great reminder of the special places we all have in our communities.

Dear friends, I want to start by thanking all of you for being here.

I want to thank my fellow elected leaders from Broward, Monroe and Palm Beach counties...

All the municipal leaders who are with us...

And all the various other government and private sector partners who are joining us.

Today's turnout and your presence during this two-day summit shows that we are all serious about working together on issues that affect us as a region.

Between our four counties here in South Florida, we have nearly 6 million people who are looking to us to put aside any differences, and who are looking to us for leadership.

More importantly, we have children and grandchildren, future generations that will look back and ask what we did to help improve their lives.

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This is why one of my top priorities has been to erase the artificial divide that exists between Miami / Broward / Palm Beach and Monroe counties.

The challenges we face don't recognize county lines.

They don't stop when you cross into Broward or Palm Beach on the I-95.

This is why we're working together in unprecedented ways on issues of transit, commerce, and sustainability, because our futures are intertwined.

Sustainability and climate change are issues where we need action, because our community depends on it.

Just ask Mayor Levine, and I'm sure he'll talk about it in a few minutes, ask him about the flooding here on the beach.

We're experiencing some impacts now such as flooding from heavy downpours and extreme high tides in spring and fall.

And our community, South Florida is surrounded by water.

Miami-Dade County is bordered by two national parks, the Everglades to the west and Biscayne Bay to the east.

And we need to make sure that our river of grass, our aquifers, our beaches, all the nature we have is here for future South Floridians to enjoy.

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It's up to us take care of the beautiful natural surroundings we all share.

Sustainability has also become an economic issue.

Our region leads the state in economic growth and job creation.

And as more people move in, we need to address our need for water infrastructure, density, and other environmental issues...

When new reports come out regarding sea level rise...

And with it comes rising insurance rates...

We need to assure investors, business people, our visitors, and our residents that we are doing all we can to mitigate the impact of climate change.

As an economic issue, this comes with both risks and opportunities.

We remember that Hurricane Katrina came through Miami first.

And we remember Hurricane Andrew, with the destruction, the business interruptions, and the recovery.

But we also benefit from the opportunity, and we learned to have improved and stronger building codes to protect infrastructure from wind damage, to where we have some of the strictest building codes in the nation.

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We gain financial benefits through storm water planning and hazard mitigation planning, especially through insurance savings.

This is why our storm water master planning process helps us operate and maintain a flood protection system that results in insurance premium savings to our residents.

Let me recognize the leadership of the members of the Miami-Dade commission who have unanimously accepted the regional climate action plan...

Created a sea level rise task force...

And passed legislation that requires the County to consider sea level rise impacts in our capital and infrastructure planning.

Let me also acknowledge the leadership of my fellow mayors and commissioners in the compact.

Our work here is an effort that has influenced state and national policy.

From incorporation of language into state legislation...

To contributions to the Center for Environmental Quality and the National Climate Assessment.

The compact is seen as a model for others to follow.

As a result, it has attracted national and international attention, and resources that would otherwise not have been available if each county had continued working independently.

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Because of all these actions, because of your engagement, this is why I am optimistic that we can tackle this challenge.

In a time when our national government is too big or too busy to care, it's up to us locally to set forth and lead the fight on this and other issues.

I know Mayor Levine can't wait until someone in D.C. or Tallahassee decides to do something about the impact of sea level rise on his community.

I know none of us can wait.

As mayors and county leaders, it's up to us to take this challenge head on.

And South Florida, as a region, can lead.

This is a tremendous opportunity to bring the expertise here, where the challenges are great...

And lead the way in developing the more robust expertise and solutions that others will benefit from.

Our region is poised to be an incubator and proving ground for creative solutions to address vulnerabilities to storm surge and flooding due to extreme weather events.

These creative solutions can then be exported to other communities with similar vulnerabilities in the U.S. and abroad.

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This is why I am announcing today that I will convene a group of business, financial and insurance leaders to begin this dialogue.

This group will work with technical staff from key County departments to begin defining the steps needed to effectively incorporate consideration of sea level rise impacts into the planning of infrastructure projects.

By bringing people and ideas from across all sectors, we recognize that this is not up to government alone, but the private sector, business leaders, everyone in our community needs to face this challenge.

Let me once again thank you for being here today, and i look forward to working together to tackle climate change, and preserve the beauty of South Florida.