



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

STATEMENT

BY

**THE MOST HONOURABLE ANDREW HOLNESS, ON, MP
PRIME MINISTER**

GENERAL DEBATE

73RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK - 27TH SEPTEMBER 2018

THEME: "BUILDING SOCIETIES, SECURING THE FUTURE"

Madam President,

I warmly congratulate you on your election to the Presidency of the 73rd session of the General Assembly. Of the four women who have served as President, you are the first from Latin America and the Caribbean. Jamaica is especially pleased that this honour has been conferred upon such an eminent appointee from our region.

We also share your desire to see greater gender balance in the Presidency of the General Assembly in the years ahead.

Madam President, you can be assured of Jamaica's full support during your tenure. Your chosen theme for this 73rd session resonates well with us. It is imperative that we make the United Nations relevant to all people through global leadership and shared responsibilities for peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies.

This year marks ten years since the global economic and financial crisis manifested itself in 2008. We are greatly encouraged, by reports from international development partners that global growth has improved, and unemployment has declined to its lowest since the crisis.

We are however, mindful that among developing economies, including small island developing states such as mine, growth prospects are becoming more uneven. We remain vulnerable to a gamut of social, economic, environmental, financial and trade-related hazards, from within and beyond our borders.

In that context, Jamaica's quest to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth and meaningful job creation has encountered challenges.

Ten years on, we still face the vagaries of an uncertain and at times volatile global economic environment. Together with persistent challenges linked to climate change and more frequent intense weather events; these all impact the pace of our development.

Notwithstanding the multiple challenges that confront us individually or collectively, Jamaica is developing the social and political consensus to pursue policies which will secure our economic independence.

In the last decade, we have:

- engaged in deep structural reform of our economy;
- reduced our debt profile from being one of the highest in the world;
- transformed our energy sector;
- increased our social support for the most vulnerable.

And what has been the result of this? Our sovereign ratings and outlook have moved from negative to positive.

We cannot wait on the world to save us, and we recognize that the world will not wait for us. Notwithstanding that we are a Small Island Developing state with numerous challenges - we are taking our destiny into our own hands. Ultimately, we believe our economic independence will secure our resilience.

Nevertheless, we continue to strengthen traditional partnerships and build new ones with like-minded countries around the world, that see the global benefits in countries big and small, rich and poor, working together to solve issues too big for any of us to solve alone.

This year, Jamaica was pleased to have been invited to represent CARICOM at outreach sessions of the G7 and the BRICS Summits. We have also been representing CARICOM throughout the year at meetings of the G20 under the Argentine presidency. Those fora represent extremely influential groupings of countries,

Jamaica believes that groupings like these, have a unique opportunity, working alongside the international development partners, to address the problems that face weaker economies across the globe.

Jamaica therefore, welcomes the opportunity to share perspectives with our strong economic partners, to ensure they gain an understanding of the risks

that we face in our region of small developing states, most of which are island states.

Jamaica stands ready to continue working on how we can transform global thinking, and together find effective solutions within a fair, rules-based multilateral system, supportive of policies which will ensure the emergence and empowerment of small and developing states - truly leaving no Country, and No One behind.

Our concerted action must embody:

- effective strategies to bolster the global financial system;
- a robust global campaign to identify funding for the implementation of Agenda 2030 and;
- resilience and adaptation measures to address the devastating effects of climate change and natural disasters.

Jamaica and our CARICOM brother and sister islands do not have the luxury of engaging in a philosophical debate on whether or not climate change is real. The issue is existential for us. Major storms are no longer uncommon. They have given way to super storms. They are stronger and more frequent.

Every year, the Caribbean region, leading right up to the south-eastern coast of the United States of America, live in fear for 5 months. 5 months of hoping that the devastation that was wreaked on North Carolina, on Antigua and Barbuda, on Texas, on Grenada, on Jamaica, are not visited upon them this year.

Have you seen what happened to Dominica?

The disaster wreaked by these super storms is the closest thing that we can imagine/compare to a nuclear event. After 4 hours of one hurricane, Dominica lost 226% of their GDP - they are still recovering.

As the Secretary-General's report confirms, we witnessed, last year, the costliest North Atlantic hurricane season – with losses estimated at 229 billion

United States Dollars. Furthermore, the economic cost of climate related disasters globally, was 320 billion United States dollars.

Madam President,

With special reference to the issue of climate change, I was particularly honoured by the invitation of Secretary General Guterres to join him and President Macron of France, in leading a special initiative to mobilize funds committed at the Copenhagen Conference in 2009 in the amount of US\$100 billion per year up to 2020. We are only two years away from the deadline, but as at today, we are nowhere near the target amount. We must therefore galvanize an effective global fundraising campaign.

Against this background, my delegation looks forward to the climate change summit to be convened by the Secretary-General in 2019. More specifically, I also commit personally to work assiduously towards increasing the momentum to secure the promised resources to address climate-related issues that affect us all.

Madam President,

Many of the structural factors that impede our ability to narrow the persistent income gap between developing and advanced economies, can be addressed by the successful implementation of Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Global estimates of the scale of the SDGs financing gap, range from 5 to 7 trillion US dollars per annum. Meaningful progress in this regard will require that we tap into various sources of funding. I cannot overstate the importance of including innovative ways of mobilizing private sector financing.

In addition, several Small Island Developing States (SIDS), like Jamaica, are deemed to have 'graduated' to middle income status primarily by virtue of their GDP per-capita. Many of them however, are highly indebted and vulnerable. High debt ratios constrain the ability to secure domestic fiscal resources at a reasonable cost, for implementation of national development goals. The reality

is that, even though many have made advances in reducing levels of extreme poverty, several of our broader development gains have stalled.

We therefore, highly commend the work undertaken by ECLAC, which affirms the importance of complementing the per-capita income criterion, by addressing structural gaps that retard development prospects for Middle-Income Countries.

Accordingly, I am reiterating my call for the international financial institutions to address this persistent problem known as the Middle-Income Trap. We believe that a special Highly Indebted Middle-Income Initiative could provide the framework for the type of support that these countries require.

It is our greatest hope that the UN High-Level Middle Income Countries Meeting, scheduled for later this year, will give the fullest consideration to these matters, and ways in which the UN system can provide support.

In the interim, Jamaica continues to work with partners like Canada, to provide a platform whereby countries can engage directly with actors in the private sector, development finance institutions and regulators.

Our goal is to forge collaborative partnerships between UN Member States and the private sector to determine practical, solution-oriented ways of securing new and long-term capital investment, utilizing a mix of public, private and blended financing to implement the SDGs.

Even as we diligently seek financing for sustainable development, we are ever mindful that we live in a world where international peace and security are under continuous threat. The world has witnessed several terrorist attacks and grapples with a range of conflicts that appear intractable.

The Secretary General has therefore appropriately placed emphasis on conflict prevention, as well as on promoting a new disarmament agenda. As he has often stated, we must confront issues concerning peace and security along a peace continuum: *“from prevention, conflict resolution and peacekeeping, to peacebuilding and sustainable long-term development”*.

Jamaica is especially interested in the efforts to build a secure environment through combating the illicit traffic and trade in small arms and light weapons.

We have made significant national institutional changes, undertaken policy enhancements and adopted legislative amendments in the areas of security and justice.

We now look forward to working with other Member States, the UN system and partners at all levels to ensure that the progress we have made, is sustainable.

Madam President,

Societies function best within an inclusive global environment, where no one feels left behind. Implementation of the SDGs must be people-centered. Embargoes and other financial and economic barriers must not become tools to prevent people, such as our neighbours, the citizens the Republic of Cuba, from attaining their right to development. Jamaica continues to call for a lifting of the embargoes against that country.

We also believe it is important to support the efforts of the Secretary General and his special envoys in pursuing political processes related to situations in the Western Sahara, Syria and Myanmar.

As we prepare to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, let us continue to be mindful of the many amongst us who consistently face discrimination of various forms.

Jamaica has been at the forefront of international human rights, having been the first country to incorporate human rights into our foreign policy strategy – a principle that we guard fiercely.

We will never lose sight of the responsibility to promote and protect the interests of the vulnerable. We are especially keen to ensure that our women, children, persons living with disabilities, elderly and young people can make

meaningful contributions, and reap, the benefits of a safe and prosperous society.

Madam President,

Jamaica will shortly assume membership of the ECOSOC currently chaired by St Vincent and the Grenadines. Our term of office will coincide with what promises to be a momentous year for that UN body.

We are committed to advancing the work of the Council, including during its High-Level Political Forum.

Madam President,

Societies are not sustainable without healthy citizens. As a region that is severely impacted by non-communicable diseases, we in the Caribbean are actively promoting and implementing measures to reverse this trend by encouraging health and wellness.

I was truly energized as I joined my CARICOM colleagues this morning in launching '**Caribbean Moves**' – a region-wide initiative aimed at raising awareness and increasing physical activity among our people - the young and not so young.

We look forward to building on the outcomes of the High-Level Meeting that has been convened this week on NCDs. Jamaica will also support ongoing actions to combat tuberculosis as well as to promote universal health coverage.

Madam President,

You have challenged us to ensure that the UN remains a beacon of hope for each citizen across the globe. To that end, the UN must be responsive to an ever-changing and unpredictable world, if it is to remain relevant and effective.

The Secretary-General is correct in stating that: "*One of the most valuable assets of the United Nations is its capacity to operate as a convener of people, a proponent of ideas, a catalyst for action and a driver of solutions.*"

For this reason, we remain steadfast in our support of efforts towards UN reform. We commend the Secretary General's actions in pressing for reform of the peace and security architecture; the UN development system; and its management and operational structure. Of course, we are ever mindful of the words of our recently departed Secretary General, Kofi Annan, a stalwart of multilateral diplomacy, that "*No reform of the UN will be complete without reform of the Security Council*".

Madam President,

Our global alliance comprises 193 sovereign states, but there is no denying the fact that we are all interdependent. A joint and multi-faceted response is required to surmount the myriad hurdles ahead of us, for it is only through collaboration that we can "*build our societies and secure our common future*".

Our legacy must be one that uplifts and inspires.

Let this therefore, be our mandate for this 73rd Session of our General Assembly.

I Thank You.