



NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT

BY

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GENERAL DEBATE

77TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**“A watershed moment: transformative solutions to
interlocking challenges”**

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Please check against delivery

Mr President,

I congratulate you on your election to the leadership of this distinguished body. You can be assured of our full commitment to the successful execution of your mandate, including from our position as a Vice-President of the session. I also acknowledge your predecessor for his sterling stewardship of the General Assembly during his 'Presidency of Hope'.

This year, Jamaica celebrates 60 years of independence and membership in the UN. We reflect with pride on the significant contributions which Jamaica, a small island developing state, has made to global efforts for peace, development and human rights, as well as in the fields of music, culture and sports.

At home, our Diamond Jubilee of Independence has provided the impetus for us to, 'Re-ignite our nation for greatness'. It is our intention to bring that same energy to the work of the 77th Session.

We gather as the world faces unprecedented overlapping crises - the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, inflation, debt, energy and food insecurity, and natural disasters fuelled by climate change. While every country has been negatively impacted, we do not all have the same capacity to withstand shocks and recover. Indeed, recovery has been uneven, and there has been further widening of pre-existing development inequalities.

Sustainable Development /Global Economic System

Mr. President,

As we search for solutions, let us acknowledge the differentiated needs and vulnerability of all members of our global family.

Small Island Developing States and some middle-income countries have particular vulnerability to climate shocks and external economic shocks, which have an oversized impact relative to their national budgets, and often crippling impact on their infrastructure. For SIDS to survive economic shocks and recover lost and damaged infrastructure, they are forced to borrow, only to be confronted again in a few years with another round of natural disasters, which could wipe out significant infrastructure and force us to add to our already high

debt. As I speak, I am monitoring a tropical system that is threatening in the Caribbean.

Jamaica believes that a comprehensive and targeted approach to accessing development finance is needed. We fully support the work of the High-Level Panel developing the Multi-Dimensional Vulnerability Index. We eagerly anticipate an era of truly equitable access to concessional financing and other funding support which will enable us to invest in the resilient infrastructure and create fiscal buffers so that we can withstand and recover quickly from the next economic, health or climate shock with little borrowing.

Without the acknowledgment of vulnerability as a basis for access to finance, SIDS will continue to struggle and will be unable to achieve the SDGs.

Even as we call for reforms of the global financial architecture to account for vulnerability, Jamaica is exercising great fiscal discipline. It has been a long and hard struggle, but we have lowered our debt-to-GDP ratio from stratospheric levels a decade ago and we continue to pursue policies to drive our debt downward. We are building fiscal buffers to ensure we can respond quickly to shocks. We are working with development partners using innovative financing tools, such as floating a Catastrophe Bond to insure us against climate disasters. Most importantly, we are mainstreaming climate resilience in all our infrastructure investment.

Climate/Environment/Oceans/ Blue Economy

Mr. President,

Small Island Developing States, like Jamaica are always mindful that despite our best efforts to improve our fiscal management and debt sustainability, a single climate generated event could wipe out 100% of our economy in a few hours.

Climate Change is an immediate existential threat for SIDS, like Jamaica, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Concerted action to slow down and halt global temperature rise, is literally a question of our survival. While we will continue to develop our own resilience and play our part in mitigating Climate Change, we cannot, by our action alone change the trajectory. Jamaica looks forward to the convening of COP27 in Egypt later this year. We call on all countries to meet their commitments and contributions to climate targets. And we call on the developed

world to increase their commitments and ambitions in climate financing, particularly for adaptation and for loss and damage.

Mr. President,

As an island, Jamaica is keenly attuned to the importance of protecting and sustainably using our ocean and marine resources. We recognise that urgent action is required to address the health and sustainability of the Ocean.

Jamaica joins the global community in celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which opened for adoption in Montego Bay, Jamaica on 10 December in 1982. The Convention is a testament to the power of multilateralism.

As the constitution for the ocean, the Convention has yielded immense benefit since its entry into force. Since 1994, Jamaica has welcomed delegates to the International Seabed Authority, who have brought to life the important deliberations on the preservation and exploitation of resources of the international seabed, which forms part of the common heritage of mankind.

Building on this, we continue to work towards a BBNJ agreement which is pivotal to safeguarding this shared resource for future generations and to ensuring equity in access to the benefits of the resources in the area.

Digital Economy / Cybersecurity / Cybercrime

Mr. President,

The pandemic has made clear that major inclusive transformation is required in Technology and Innovation. While all countries suffered during the pandemic, they didn't all suffer equally. A country's economic resilience was often a reflection of how digitally advanced it was. Many countries lag far behind in digital access, penetration, and capability. We must prioritize bridging the digital divide, both within and between countries, to create a level playing field and to spur transformation of critical sectors of the economy and the society.

As the world prepares for an even more digitally engaged future, we must take effective steps to protect cyberspace and its physical infrastructure to ensure that it is safely and securely available to all users across the world. Cybercrimes are an

increasing threat and international cooperation is required to deal with this in a comprehensive manner.

Jamaica fully supports the work underway in the UN to elaborate a cybercrime treaty and to work towards guidelines and a framework for cybersecurity.

Crime and Weapons

Mr. President,

Several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are facing an epidemic of crime and violence. Since the Pandemic and the disruption in education, challenges with mental health are increasingly being expressed in violent ways.

The propensity to resolve conflict or cope with social and mental stresses through violence requires a public health response, and Jamaica has not only engaged in global initiatives such as the Partnership to End Violence Against Children, but has also empanelled a National Commission on the Prevention of Violence to advise the government on building out an articulated public health and social services response.

However, the situation is exponentially complicated and exacerbated by the influx of illegal and unregistered small arms into our country. From organized transnational criminal enterprises to street level gangs, to the misguided youth in the inner city, the availability of guns is driving an ever-increasing homicide rate. In the same way that a war on drugs is being prosecuted, in which we have been faithful partners in policing what comes through our waters or leaves our shores, there now needs to be a “war on guns”. Jamaica does not manufacture guns, but our population suffers from the effects of widely available guns. The countries that manufacture weapons that are available to the public must implement stronger measures to ensure that those weapons do not end up on streets and in the hands of people for whom they were not intended.

In the same way there is concern about illegal drugs on the streets of the rich countries there must be concern about guns on the streets of developing countries like Jamaica.

Haiti

Mr. President,

The situation in our sister CARICOM country of Haiti is one of deep concern for Jamaica and the region. The challenges there - political, economic, environmental and social - are longstanding and present serious obstacles to peace and dignity of the Haitian people, and for the region, particularly. Crime and other security concerns have a wider impact. We support a Haitian-led process to arrive at sustainable solutions to the challenges, and are committed, together with CARICOM and the international community, to moving beyond standing with Haiti, to working more closely with Haiti to provide consistent and meaningful support.

Cuba

Mr. President,

Jamaica also joins the calls, once again, for the discontinuation of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against our closest Caribbean neighbour, Cuba.

Reparatory Justice

Mr. President,

We cannot properly make use of this watershed moment to benefit the future without adequately addressing the past. Jamaica reaffirms its determination to further the call for the international recognition of reparatory justice as a necessary path to healing, restoration of dignity, and progress for people of African descent.

The world cannot turn a blind eye to the systemic imbalances which persist after centuries of exploitation. If our moral standards today on which we claim a higher civilization, acknowledges that actions in the past, which generated wealth for some by depriving others of their freedom, was wrong; then that same moral standard must lead those who benefited from the wrongs of the past and claim a higher civilization today, to repair that which their morality now acknowledges to be an injustice. There is an inescapable duty for economic redress of historical injustices and recognition of the dignity of affected States and Peoples.

The arc of international morality would not have completed its bend for the peoples of the African Diaspora, without open and inclusive exchanges on the

dispensation of reparatory justice. We recognise the complexities associated with this sensitive issue.

Yet, as with all complex global challenges, we must summon the determination to take the bold and creative steps to meet the moment.

Multilateralism/The UN

Mr. President,

Since attaining independence sixty years ago, multilateralism has been a core principle of Jamaica's foreign policy. It continues to underpin our cooperation with Member States and other stakeholders within the United Nations system. Transformative global solutions will only thrive within a robust multilateral framework.

The current global political and security environment is cause for great alarm. We have witnessed a nuclear armed super-power, permanent member of the Security Council, acting with impunity to launch a military offensive against its neighbour.

Russia's military incursion into Ukraine can only be condemned as a flagrant violation of the UN Charter. We must never return to the days when military might is considered a right.

Jamaica strongly cautions against actions which could signal the demise of a peaceful multilateral order.

Mr. President,

I commend the Secretary-General and his team on the initiatives undertaken within his purview to fulfil relevant mandates. For their part, Member States must also address long-outstanding issues of reform and restructuring, including of the Security Council. This critical organ must work more transparently and responsively, be more representative of the world of today, and more prepared for the world of tomorrow.

A rotating seat for SIDS will ensure that the unique perspectives, challenges, and contribution of SIDS are permanently available to the Council, improving the quality of its work in the service of our people.

Global Tourism Resilience Day

Mr. President,

As a highly tourism-dependent country, in the most tourism-dependent region in the world, Jamaica has invested heavily in building resilience in the tourism sector. During the pandemic, we pioneered the introduction of “resilient corridors” on the island, which served as a focused, protocol-based and data-driven blueprint for safely reopening the tourism sector. The corridors assisted greatly in fast-tracking the recovery for our tourism sector.

We have been engaging countries across the world in our efforts to bolster resilience in Global Tourism and **Jamaica is proposing the official designation of February 17th annually as Global Tourism Resilience Day.**

This annual commemoration would serve to encourage a consistent examination of resilience-building in the tourism sector, in the face of persisting global disruptions to sustainable tourism and sustainable development. We encourage the global community to work with us towards commemorating the first Global Tourism Resilience Day in 2023.

Closing

Mr President,

While our current reality presents complex challenges, I believe that the capacity and capabilities exist within in this body to overcome the challenges. The gap between challenges we face and solutions which exist, or yet to be created, is the human will. This assembly is about developing the common global political will to see this as a watershed moment to deploy and accelerate transformative solutions to the interlocking challenges we face. The people of the world are counting on us to lead and work together as one humanity, one love. Jamaica is committed to doing our part, in this our sixtieth year of membership, and in the years ahead.

I thank you.