



GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA

NATIONAL POLICY STATEMENT BY

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GENERAL DEBATE

78TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**“Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on
the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace,
prosperity, progress and sustainability for all”**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL, UNHQ
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Mr. President,

On behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, I extend warmest congratulations on your election to preside over this pivotal 78th Session of the General Assembly. Jamaica is proud to see a son of the Caribbean ascend to this high office. We share your vision of a world in which trust is rebuilt, global solidarity is reignited and action is accelerated for the benefit of all our peoples. You can count on our fullest support in this endeavour.

Mr. President,

We meet at a time when the need for deliberate action on several global fronts, is particularly urgent.

Across the world, we are required to make choices that will advance our present condition, and even more importantly, the world we will leave for future generations. The Secretary-General has sounded the alarm and issued strong appeals for greater ambition and action. Young people all over the world have been expressing their frustrations, and have been calling for more from us as leaders. We must act now if we are to meet the hopes, dreams and aspirations of present and future generations.

Jamaica has long been committed to ambition and action beyond our size. With great effort and determination, despite enormous challenges and uncertainties, we have made significant strides in recent years, to deliver **peace, prosperity and progress** for our people. This has not come easy. It has required bold, strategic, inclusive and steady leadership, sustained commitment, hard decisions and great collective sacrifice. We are a country with a strong track record of peace, democratic traditions, political stability and respect for human rights. We are also now an economy which is growing in resilience and sustainability, having emerged from the pandemic in acceleration mode - a place where businesses can easily be started and can thrive; where jobs are being created for women and men. Out of Many, One People, we are building a cohesive society with opportunities for everyone to achieve their full potential.

PEACE

Mr. President,

Peace is not merely the absence of conflict. It is a social condition that allows our societies to channel our collective energies towards building a better future for ourselves, our children, and generations to come.

In our own journey towards peace, as we tackle the twin headed monster of crime and violence, Jamaica has invested heavily in the men and women of our security forces and the technology and infrastructure needed to support their work. Improved working conditions, increased mobility, use of forensics and new legislative tools are delivering results. In this regard, we welcome a 22% reduction in serious crimes since the start of the year. Mr. President, we know there is more to be done.

We are committed to using every lawful tool to save lives; to social cohesion, inclusivity, and respect for the inherent dignity of every human being. These elements are embedded in the training and capacity building of our security forces. Furthermore, we await the report of the Violence Commission appointed by Prime Minister Holness to make recommendations for fundamental, holistic and inclusive solutions to the multi-faceted challenges of crime and violence.

We simply cannot, however, win this fight alone. Small island states like ours with porous borders rely on global partnerships to combat trafficking in persons, arms and drugs. Jamaica does not manufacture guns or ammunition. Countries that do and which serve as major consumers of drugs must do more in preventing their outflow and in fighting these elements of transnational organized crime, which have massive impact on developing countries like ours in the region. Last year, in this very hall, Prime Minister Holness called for a war on guns comparable to the war on drugs. As he also said more recently at the International Drug Enforcement Conference which Jamaica co-hosted last week, “[t]he war on drugs must be reciprocated, complemented and fought in parallel with the war on guns... Our joint efforts not only seek to combat illegal firearms

and drugs, but also to fortify international collaboration, reinforcing our pursuit of justice and security".

We also recognize the threat posed to peace and security in the digital space, and therefore continue to work to advance our domestic capacity as well as multilateral efforts to address cybersecurity. We are also honoured to lead CARICOM's work towards the conclusion of a UN Convention on Cybercrime.

These are not only high-flown concepts. All have direct implications for the efforts by governments of developing countries, like Jamaica, to deliver safe communities - real and virtual - in which families can live, work, go to school and achieve their dreams.

Mr. President,

On the matter of international peace and security, Jamaica firmly believes that dialogue, diplomacy, and cooperation must be pursued as the pathways to resolution of conflict. Jamaica, therefore, calls on all nations to prioritize the pursuit of peace over the perpetuation of conflict and aggression. We reiterate our call for an end to the war in Ukraine, and urge parties to regional and civil wars to choose dialogue and co-existence over conflict, as it is ordinary people and the most vulnerable people who suffer the devastating consequences of war.

We are proud that Latin America and the Caribbean remains a Zone of Peace and a nuclear-free zone. Jamaica reiterates our long-standing position that all States must heed the call for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and refrain from the testing, use, and threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Mr. President,

I must use this opportunity to reiterate Jamaica's and CARICOM's call for international action to restore order and security in our sister nation, Haiti. It is critical that we protect vulnerable Haitian lives and allow the country to move towards achieving its

sustainable development goals. We fully support all meaningful efforts to contribute to Haitian-led solutions to the multi-dimensional and multi-faceted challenges with which they are faced.

Let me be clear: there are no easy fixes. But let me be equally clear - doing nothing is not an option.

Jamaica supports the call for a multinational security support mission to bolster the Haitian National Police in their efforts to vanquish ever strengthening criminal gangs. Prime Minister Holness has made clear, that subject to the relevant Security Council resolution, Jamaica will contribute personnel to participate in such an effort. We listened in Port au Prince when the CARICOM mission visited earlier this year. We have also heard the clear call of the **majority** of the Haitian people as reflected in the polls conducted **in Haiti** by reputable local civil society and international agencies. We therefore urge the permanent members of the Security Council to put aside geo-political sensitivities, and to answer the call of the Haitian people and of their brothers and sisters in the Caribbean region. A UNSC Chapter 7 resolution authorizing a multi-national security support mission must be adopted without further delay.

We join CARICOM's commendations of President Ruto, for Kenya's steadfast commitment to lead such a mission and welcome the offers from other countries, including from our own region. We call on other capable countries, other capable regions, to lend their, financial, human, logistical and in-kind support, to ensure that the mission on which we must embark will be effective in delivering peace and stability for the people of Haiti.

Jamaica cannot be any more clear. Ordinary Haitians are suffering. Humanitarian support cannot be distributed in insecurity; hospitals cannot deliver care in insecurity; children cannot go to school in insecurity; people cannot go to work in insecurity. Candidates cannot offer themselves and people cannot vote in insecurity. The situation can and will become even worse if we do not act. Peace and reasonable stability are indisputably necessary preconditions for each and every aspect of support and development needed in Haiti, including the holding of free and fair elections. Rest

assured that only chaos will reign if the international community remains distracted. We must meet the moment.

Jamaica will also continue to lend its support to the CARICOM Eminent Persons Group as they work with the Haitian government and stakeholders towards a Haitian owned solution to the political and governance crisis that has gripped the nation. Having hosted the first EPG meeting with stakeholders in Kingston in May of this year, we remain unwavering in our commitment to working towards a sustainable political outcome. We want Haiti - the first independent black republic - to be able to deliver, for its people, the prosperity they have always deserved.

ECONOMIC PROGRESS/PROSPERITY

Mr. President,

Jamaica, itself, has been undergoing a significant transformation over the last several years, fostering a vibrant, growing, sustainable economy. From farm roads to bridges and highways, from wind turbines to solar panels, from fibre optics to satellite connectivity, increased investment in infrastructure is playing a pivotal role in this transformation. Our efforts to diversify and modernize critical industries such as tourism, agriculture, manufacturing, and global services, including BPOs, have yielded substantial results. We have not only increased economic growth but also created new employment opportunities for our citizens. This year, Jamaica achieved its lowest unemployment rate on record at 4.5%.

Fiscal responsibility and prudent economic management have been central to our achievements. We have paid down our debt, expanded revenue by including more people in the formal economy and improved tax collection. We have established an independent central bank and legislated fiscal rules, ensuring a stable macro-economic environment. We recognize the need, however, to ensure that there is an appropriate balance

between macro-economic performance and social cohesion so that as many people as possible benefit from growth and stability in the economy.

Since April 2022, we have granted the largest increases in minimum wage in the last 20 years, cumulatively amounting to 86%; conducted the largest and most comprehensive public sector compensation review; implemented a social pension for the elderly; as well as increased the benefits under and expanded student beneficiaries of our social safety net programme. We have also broadened coverage of our national health fund and are investing in health infrastructure. Despite several external shocks, our people have remained resilient and we remain poised for even greater growth and development.

We have invested heavily in our young people, establishing a new coding academy, providing STEM scholarships to students and student teachers at tertiary institutions, and removing all fees from our national skills training agency up to associate degree level. We are partnering with the private sector for internships and employment to ensure that our young people are not only catalysts but beneficiaries of sustained economic growth.

Jamaica also remains committed to women's economic empowerment, the achievement of gender equality and the elimination of violence against women and girls, and has embarked on an extensive process of policy and legislative reforms. In February of this year, Jamaica established a Bicameral Caucus of Women Parliamentarians to bolster our efforts to coalesce around women's issues and to ensure that the needs of women and girls are adequately reflected in our legislative framework. On July 1st, the new Sexual Harassment Act came into effect and sensitization sessions have now started. The government has also ramped up the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the development of its policies through the institutionalization of gender focal points across the public sector.

Mr. President,

As a Small Island Developing State, an enabling global environment is essential for Jamaica to build on this foundation.

We are proud to have led and participated in global efforts to reform the international financial architecture and to improve access to affordable financing for development, including climate finance. More work is however needed in this regard to facilitate inclusiveness and equity for all states, and particularly for highly indebted and vulnerable Small Island Developing States. We will therefore continue our advocacy to build momentum towards ambitious and pragmatic solutions. The multi-dimensional vulnerability index is urgently needed to address the vexed issue of graduation on the basis of per capita income only, and its implications for access to concessional finance and grant funding. We look forward to the report of the High-Level Expert Panel and its early adoption by the international financial community.

Mr. President,

The pandemic taught us many lessons which we cannot afford to forget. For developing states, it exacerbated previously existing inequities and inequalities within and among countries. In terms of trade in services, global tourism and its related sectors were disproportionately impacted as the pandemic exposed the vulnerability of these industries. Jamaica, as a leading tourism destination, recognizes the value of resilient tourism for economic, social and environmental development. Last year, at this very podium, Prime Minister Holness issued the call for the declaration of an annual Global Tourism Resilience Day. I humbly express our sincere gratitude to all Member States for answering this call with the General Assembly's designation, by consensus, of February 17th as Global Tourism Resilience Day. We look forward to collaborating with you on innovations to deepen the resilience of the sector.

SUSTAINABILITY

Mr. President,

A strong, robust and inclusive multilateral system, with the United Nations at its centre, remains the single most effective means of ensuring international cooperation towards a sustainable future. It is the forum in which small states have an equal voice and equal participation in global decision-making.

Unfortunately, the multilateral system itself has faced significant challenges over the last few years - the pandemic, a war in Europe, shifting geopolitical tides and a stubborn resistance to the realities of climate change, to name a few. Defying the odds, however, our collective endeavours have resulted in the adoption of the BBNJ Agreement in June this year. As a sustainable ocean economy, the seat of the International Seabed Authority and the home of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, Jamaica actively participated in the negotiations, and looks forward to its early entry into force and effective implementation towards the sustainable use and conservation of our invaluable ocean resources.

Jamaica also welcomes the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework which will catalyze action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. This hard-won victory for sustainable development highlights our shared commitment to protect 30 percent of terrestrial, coastal and marine areas by 2030.

Both these landmark agreements attained through multilateral action will make an impactful contribution to furthering our shared objective of benefiting from our natural resources now, but in a way that ensures their sustainability for future generations.

As we look forward to COP28, we recall the breakthrough agreement secured at COP27 to establish a Loss and Damage Fund. The work of the Transitional Committee will be vital to ensuring that the Fund can be properly structured and operationalized. SIDS are

counting on meaningful progress in this regard. We also expect that all States will commit to the achievement of net zero fossil fuel production and to keeping 1.5 alive.

We are playing our part through our more ambitious NDCs to bolster our society, economy and country against the existential threat of Climate Change. In that regard, we are working assiduously:

- To reduce greenhouse gas emissions,
- To increase re-forestation, including through our 3 million trees in 3 years project,
- To reduce plastic waste - including in the marine environment,
- To accelerate the energy transition towards renewables, and
- To address coastal erosion and risks to biodiversity both on land and at sea.

Notwithstanding our efforts, the responsibility for effective action is a global one, as the wide-ranging consequences of inaction are equally global. Having just completed the Climate Ambition Summit, we urge major and emerging economies to elevate their ambition, and to deliver on their commitments under the Paris Agreement. This is a matter of survival for all our countries and peoples, especially small island developing states.

As we prepare for the Fourth International SIDS Conference, to be held in Antigua and Barbuda in May 2024, we look forward to assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of previous Plans of Action. The Conference will also set the agenda for the programme of action for the sustainable development of SIDS for the next ten years. Jamaica looks forward to having tangible outcomes focusing on the climate crisis, bio-diversity and issues around debt.

Mr. President,

As we mark the mid-point of the 2030 agenda, we must channel our fullest efforts towards accelerating achievement of the SDGs through partnerships and a whole-of-society approach. At the SDG Summit, we recognized the mutually reinforcing and cross-cutting nature of the SDGs, and that we must turbo charge our efforts to attain the transformation we need for people, planet and prosperity. As we all work towards the attainment of the SDGs, Jamaica joins the international community in the unanimous call for ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

Mr. President,

Our shared commitment to achieve progress, prosperity and sustainability for all cannot be fulfilled until we definitively close the chapter on slavery and its legacies in our global history.

The residual impact of the immorality of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade has lingered for far too long, and justice and accountability are long overdue. The systemic imbalances caused by centuries of exploitation constitute the foundation of the persistent under-development, which countries like Jamaica have worked hard to overcome.

Jamaica, therefore, reaffirms its determination to further the call for the international recognition of reparatory justice as a necessary path to complete healing, restoration of dignity, and progress for people of African descent. Together, we must stride confidently forward in good faith, building on the lessons of that horrific past, and moving purposefully towards a common future. Furthermore, Jamaica supports the call for an extension of the International Decade for People of African Descent as insufficient progress has been made to address racial injustices worldwide.

Mr. President,

Complex global problems demand comprehensive global responses. As we work during this 78th Session to achieve and maintain lasting peace, to attain and build shared prosperity, and to accelerate meaningful progress and sustainability, Jamaica will remain hopeful that, together, we can overcome the major challenges that stand in our way. Genuine political will and innovative thinking are required to not only identify solutions but to also pursue them diligently and consistently until the desired results are achieved.

I assure you, and all delegations, of Jamaica's unwavering commitment, support and partnership in this noble effort.

I thank you.