



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

STATEMENT BY

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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
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TO THE

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
69TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

New York

27th September 2014

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Mr. President,

I stand here today as a representative of a nation with strong ancestral ties to the African Continent to welcome your election to the Presidency of this 69th session of the General Assembly. We are confident that the experience and skills that you bring to this high office will be invaluable as we tackle the myriad challenges that confront us today.

To your predecessor, Ambassador John Ashe of Antigua and Barbuda, I convey sincere appreciation for the leadership and vision that he showed in guiding our work; not the least of which was the success he achieved in "setting the stage" for the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Global Political Environment

Mr. President,

The quest for peace and development has assumed an urgency we have seldom seen. We live in a time of great instability and conflict. At the same time, millions of citizens face unbearable levels of hardship and endure unconscionable levels of suffering. Far too many of our fellow men and women are being left behind.

It rests within our grasp to build a better future for our peoples. This is the time to put people firmly at the centre of our development aspirations; to tackle the root causes of conflict; to create a culture of peace; and to entrench the principles of justice, equity, democracy and respect for the rule of law. Recommitment to the principles of multilateralism and fidelity to the ideals enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations are central to our efforts to accomplish these goals.

International Development Agenda

Mr. President,

In the coming months, our attention will be focused on elaborating an international development agenda for the post-2015 period. This provides an invaluable opportunity for us to address the critical challenges of poverty, inequality, global insecurity and environmental degradation.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda must have poverty eradication as its central focus. In so doing, we must give due regard to the developmental status of each country, in particular small island developing states and countries classified as middle income. Implementing and delivering the Post-2015 Development Agenda requires a strong focus on the means of implementation.

SIDS: Outcome of Third International Conference on SIDS

Mr. President,

The Third International Conference on SIDS drew international attention to the unique vulnerabilities that threaten the very existence and survival of this group of countries. Our ability to withstand the ever-increasing risk of economic and environmental shocks requires that we forge effective partnerships with other members of the international community. In short we cannot do

this alone. Jamaica, therefore, welcomes the support of the international community in joining forces with SIDS to negotiate the SAMOA Pathway, which builds on the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy.

Let me say though, Mr. President, that support for SIDS must continue beyond support for the Conference. Our concerns need to be addressed in the context of Post-2015 Development Agenda. Among these concerns are the full and effective integration of SIDS into the multilateral trading system; increased voice and participation in international financial institutions; the application of more relevant methods for measuring growth and representing our state of development; and increased support to enhance our resilience to natural hazards and economic shocks.

Climate Summit and upcoming UNFCCC COPs

Mr. President,

We welcome the outcome of the Climate Summit convened by the Secretary-General. The participation of business interests, civil society and a range of international institutions highlighted the importance of promoting concerted action among various stakeholders to address climate change.

While the threats posed by climate change may be theoretical for some, it is very real for those of us who live in the Caribbean. In recent years, we have had to deal with the increased frequency of hurricanes and their widespread impact on our land, lives and livelihoods. The financial impact of hurricanes adds to the burden of the dire economic challenges that we continue to bear. Our fellow CARICOM countries in the Eastern Caribbean will no doubt share their recent experiences with floods that lasted a few hours last Christmas leading to GDP losses from which they have yet to recover.

As we prepare for the Conference of the Parties in Lima, Peru later this year, all countries must be engaged in a cooperative effort to devise an appropriate response to climate change that will result in a steep reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions. We also need action in accordance with the decision of the Conference of the Parties to 'adopt a protocol, another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the UNFCCC that will be applicable to all parties'. On this we dare not fail. Our commitment to addressing climate change must be given effect at the twenty-first session of the COP in Paris next year.

Social Issues

Mr. President,

This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most universally ratified human rights treaty. 2014 also marks the 20th Anniversary of the historic International Conference on Population and Development. At the same time, we are on the cusp of the 20th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be celebrated in 2015. This is, therefore, an opportune moment to evaluate the progress made in safeguarding the rights of women and children.

All children have the right to live a life free from fear and violence. These are essential prerequisites for the development of their full range of skills and talents. Earlier this year, Jamaica was pleased to host, the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Violence Against Children, an inter-regional meeting that examined the impact of violence against children. I urge us, as we craft the Post-2015 development agenda, to be seized of the importance of addressing the special needs of children and youth.

We also call for special attention to be paid to achieving gender equality. Rooting out violence against women, enhancing women's economic empowerment and promoting their equal participation at all levels of decision making should be essential tasks in this regard.

Mr. President,

I turn now to the problem posed by the heinous activity of human trafficking; a crime of global proportions, which exploits the most vulnerable among us, not the least of whom are women and children. Jamaica calls upon the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to provide a framework for Member States to develop a robust programme to help bring an end to this affront to human dignity and freedom.

Mr. President,

We cannot ignore the link between our efforts to spur development and the need to safeguard the health of our people. The challenges to security and sustainable development posed by threats to global public health have been devastatingly illustrated by the recent outbreak of the Ebola epidemic. As we heard just two days ago from the Director-General of the WHO "every day, every minute, counts" in fighting "the most severe, acute public health emergency seen in modern times".

This is the time for courageous partnership, not inaction based on fear. An urgent and robust international response is required to marshal all the medical expertise and modern technologies that are at our disposal. The pandemic nature of global health threats such as Ebola and HIV/AIDS, including the silent killers of Non-Communicable Diseases, require that we employ measures to combat them that are similar in intensity and urgency to those used in the fight against other global challenges.

Threats to International Peace and Security

Mr. President,

Jamaica is concerned that the conflicts in Syria, the Gaza Strip, Iraq, Ukraine, South Sudan and Mali pose serious threats to regional and international security. These conflicts are neither limited in scope nor confined to national borders. The instability in Libya, Yemen and the Central African Republic is equally troubling. Of even greater concern are the resulting humanitarian crises and widespread violations of human rights. It is undeniable that these crises are fuelled by the growing propensity to funnel and transfer conventional arms to non-state actors, including rebel groups and separatist militias. The militarization of such groups often serves to further these conflicts rather than hasten their end.

Each passing day the international community is confronted with new crises, the emergence of greater acts of barbarism, and the rise of more lethal terrorist groups. In the past few months, we witnessed the atrocities of ISIL; the downing of a civilian aircraft in Ukraine and a UN peacekeeping helicopter in South Sudan. We dare not forget that it is now 166 days since the Boko Haram terrorist group brazenly abducted 200 school girls. Yet, their desperate plight continues.

Mr. President,

It is unfortunate that the number and scale of these crises not only place extraordinary demands on the international aid system, thereby hampering its capacity to respond, but also serves to inure the international community to the horrific levels of suffering being borne by civilian populations.

Resolving these conflicts requires global and regional cooperation. It is clear also that conflict prevention must assume greater prominence. We cannot continue to operate in crisis mode only. Our vision is that of a United Nations transformed into a more effective instrument for preventing conflict and securing just and peaceful settlements.

Recent events in Gaza demonstrate that the need for a lasting resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains as urgent as ever before. Jamaica believes that the cycle of violence will continue in the absence of a negotiated political settlement based on a just, lasting and comprehensive agreement that guarantees the security of Israel and recognizes the Palestinian State within internationally recognised borders.

Mr. President,

We reiterate our commitment to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. In the Caribbean, we are acutely aware of the pernicious impact of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, fuelled by the dangerous nexus with the drug trade. This engenders the single greatest cause for fear and insecurity amongst our citizens. For the past two decades we have remained resolute in our call for a global partnership to fight this scourge. We are pleased that with the 50th ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty earlier this week, this historic treaty will enter into force on 25th December.

All states, whether small or large, have a role to play in the maintenance of international peace and security. Jamaica is therefore honoured to assume the Chairmanship of the First Committee of this 69th session, which reflects our commitment to advancing the objectives of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

International Law

Mr. President,

Among the major milestones to be celebrated next year will be the 70th anniversary of the International Court of Justice. Jamaica is firm in its commitment to the highest standards of respect for international justice and supports the role of the Court.

Jamaica's National Group has nominated Patrick Lipton Robinson as a candidate for election to the International Court of Justice for the term 2015 - 2024. His nomination demonstrates Jamaica's preparedness to contribute to the work of the Court and underscores that all states regardless of size can make a contribution to the development of the rules and norms of international law.

Permanent Memorial Initiative/International Year of People of African Descent

Mr. President,

In 2015, we expect to erect a permanent memorial to honour the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Its location outside this very hall will serve as a place of meditation and solemn reflection on the horrors of slavery and the need to prevent its recurrence and to address its ongoing legacy. I encourage Member States to contribute to the Trust Fund established to underwrite the cost of the Memorial. Only a small shortfall remains. Let us press on to the end and meet the final goal.

Jamaica welcomes the forthcoming commencement of the International Decade for People of African Descent through which the international community will undertake a range of activities to address racism, xenophobia, discrimination and prejudice, as well as systemic inequalities and underdevelopment. People of African descent must be engaged directly on the range of measures that can be taken to redress the legacy of the historic wrongs they have suffered. CARICOM countries believe that reparatory justice is an important element in this process.

Cuban embargo

Mr. President,

Jamaica remains opposed to the unilateral application of economic sanctions and trade restrictions applied by one State against another. We reiterate our support for an end to the economic, financial and commercial embargo against Cuba, and urge all States that continue to apply such measures to repeal or invalidate these laws.

Mr. President,

We have it within our power to shape a world that is just and equitable and which embraces both peace and development with equal fervour. As we prepare to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the United Nations next year, we re-commit to the lofty goals enshrined in the UN Charter: peace and security, and the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

Let us get on with the task.

