



PERMANENT MISSION OF  
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY THE

HONOURABLE SEYMOUR MULLINGS, MP  
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER  
AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
AND FOREIGN TRADE

TO THE FIFTY-FOURTH SESSION  
OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President,

On behalf of the delegation of Jamaica I extend to you our congratulations on your election to the presidency of this 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly. You and your country, Namibia, are graduates of the United Nations, steeped in its principles, faithful to its causes and committed to its goals. We have full confidence that your leadership will continue to guide us in this session in the adoption of constructive decisions which will serve to strengthen the role of the Organization in world affairs.

We express our appreciation to the outgoing President, Dr. Didier Operti, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay for his outstanding work in conducting the business of our last session.

We congratulate the Secretary-General for his Report outlining the activities of the Organization over the past year and containing his vision for its future work.

Jamaica welcomes the three states which, this year, have joined the membership of the United Nations - The Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. Their presence will enrich our deliberations as they bring their particular experiences and perspectives to influence the direction and work of the Organization. Their admission coincides with the holding of the Special Session of the General Assembly on Small Islands Developing Countries which, over the last two days addressed the peculiar problems of vulnerability affecting these states which merit special attention within the international community.

The three nations we welcome today are also linked to Jamaica through the Commonwealth of Nations. This year the Commonwealth celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and we salute its achievements in cooperation especially in the promotion of development objectives of its membership, including the recent initiatives to address the special problems of smaller states.

Mr. President,

The widening of the gap between rich and poor and the increasing marginalisation for a large number of developing countries within the world economy are urgent matters demanding the attention of the international community. The reasons for these trends are well-known - differences in levels in resource endowments; the early advantage in modernisation of production processes capital accumulation and technological development - all have helped

to consolidate the dominance of the developed countries in world production and trade. Those who have started later in the day will not find it easy to close the gap. And it is not true to say that the developing countries have only themselves to blame. Most of us have implemented programmes of structural adjustment and stabilisation policies. But we have found that the current orthodoxy of free markets and the development model based on liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation is not fulfilling its heralded benefits in trade and investment flows. There is evident need to review the prescriptions and to promote a development policy which takes more into account the specific socio-economic context of developing countries and to devise more equitable arrangements in international economic relations.

In an interdependent world, the human dimension of the development equation, especially the growing incidence of poverty and all its manifestations, must continue to be a matter of concern to the entire global community. It is therefore essential that we seek to establish a better framework for development cooperation and to implement an agenda for development as a matter of priority within the United Nations system.

Currently, what we are seeing is a withering of interest and diminished commitment on the issue of cooperation for development and a hardening of attitudes in an atmosphere which preaches competitiveness and the survival of the fittest. It is clear to us that special arrangements are needed, not only in relation to special categories of countries, but also in relation to commodities where serious problems would result from the rigorous application of the dogma of free trade. Regrettably, even where such special arrangements exist they are under threat.

The challenge to the banana regime established within the framework of the Lomé Convention and the ruling of the WTO panel which has now led to negotiations for an amended regime, sends a message which is particularly discouraging, and signals the indifference of some countries to the plight of others. The end result is not yet determined; but at this time the economies of some Caribbean States face a danger not just to their prospects for economic stability and growth but to their very survival. Many appeals have been made which have gone unheeded. More than anything else the banana controversy has signified the extent to which the interests of small producers are at the mercy of those in a position of dominance in the world economy and world trade.

Another discouraging trend is the diminished significance and reduced contributions by donor countries in the area of development cooperation. At a time of the increasing incidence of poverty and a looming threat of marginalisation, levels of Official Development Assistance have been steadily decreasing both at bilateral and multilateral levels. In the case of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), technical assistance has been

shrinking especially over the last five years. In 1994 contributions to the UNDP were in the region of \$1.1 billion. This has steadily declined to the current level for this year of \$718 million.

We have been supporting initiatives for reform in order to promote better co-ordination and greater efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the delivery of technical assistance in the operational activities of the United Nations. What we have seen, however, is that the reform process seems more directed at generating cost savings and achieving a pooling of resources without increasing the quantum of funding available for development cooperation under the auspices of the United Nations. The process under way is one of contraction of UN-related development activities at the country level and a withering away of the role of the United Nations in an area of critical importance for developing countries. The reduced impact of the United Nations at the country level is already significant and comes at a time when the needs are greater than ever.

We call for a new commitment to development cooperation, a new global partnership between the developed and the developing countries and a new dialogue to review the policies and principles directing international economic relations and for a new dispensation with regard to policy prescriptions affecting the development process. Without this, developing countries will be engulfed in the perils of globalisation with consequences, not just for economic welfare but for the viability of political structures and social stability.

Mr. President, there are also other more insidious dimensions of globalization, especially those which impinge on the security of states which we must consider. Within the growing internationalisation of markets facilitated by improved technology and policies of liberalisation, the spectre of transnational crime has grown to significant proportions, especially in the illicit trade in narcotics and small arms. Together, these instruments of death and destruction represent a significant danger to internal security of many countries, fostering criminal activities which serve to destabilize and corrupt the social order, to undermine democratic institutions and to increase lawlessness.

We believe that this growing trade in weapons which promotes organised crime, terrorist activities and drug trafficking requires urgent attention by the international community. Jamaica, therefore, welcomes the arrangements for the holding of the first International Conference on Small Arms which is to take place in the year 2000. We look forward to this as a good opportunity to develop a programme for implementation by member states to control the scale and distribution of these weapons.

Mr. President, on reviewing the broader issue of international security we have to note developments which give rise to concern and anxiety about the future of the world order and the role of the United Nations. The Organisation

should become engaged wherever international peace is threatened and where conflicts break out. Although the danger of global conflict arising from ideological confrontation has now, in large measure, receded; the world is still full of threats to peace.

Wars continue to be waged at the regional level, primarily as a result of regional rivalries and unresolved territorial disputes. At the national level ethnic strife and political divisiveness have continued to fuel internal conflict leading to heavy loss of life, economic disruption and affecting regional stability from the spill-over of refugees to neighbouring states.

We endorse the Secretary-General's strategy of quiet diplomacy and urge him to use his influence wherever possible to forestall the outbreak of conflict and to promote peace and reconciliation between disputing parties. In accordance with the principles of national sovereignty, he will need the cooperation and support of member states in the efforts for the maintenance of peace as delicate problems can arise in relation to any process of diplomatic intervention with respect to the role to be undertaken by the United Nations and appropriate regional organisations.

During the past year, events in the Balkans have raised profound questions about the principle of intervention, the use of force, the scale of military enforcement and the role of the Security Council. The debate on these questions has revealed differing perspectives, elements of consensus and varying positions on the applicable principles of international law. In recent times, we have witnessed atrocities committed as a result of the practice of ethnic cleansing as communities rise up against each other to settle old grievances. We all must continue to condemn these practices and understand the need for some kind of action to halt such excesses which violate international humanitarian norms.

But the principles of international law affecting the sovereignty of states and the use of force should not be brushed aside. We believe in the adoption of an approach which has the confidence of the international community whereby diplomatic and any necessary enforcement action is taken or authorised by the multilateral institutions entrusted with safeguarding international peace and security. The Security Council has the primary responsibility. It should not be ignored and disregarded in favour of unilateral action on the part of any state or group of states.

Mr. President, while the situation in the Balkans has dominated international attention over the past year, more attention should be given to the situation in Africa where even more serious problems have arisen involving ethnic strife and political turmoil, affecting neighbouring states and creating humanitarian emergencies. As the Secretary-General has observed in his

Report, too little attention has been given to the conflicts arising in Africa despite the enormous toll in loss of life and in disruption and suffering resulting from armed insurgencies and inter-state conflict. We are, however, encouraged by the process taking place in the West African region affecting Liberia and Sierra Leone and we must pay tribute to the work of ECOWAS which has shouldered the burden of peace-building in these two states so battered by civil conflict.

We also note with appreciation the efforts of the Organisation of African Unity in regard to the situation in the Great Lakes Region and hope that the Lusaka Agreement will form the basis for reconciliation and peace. The situation in Angola remains a tragic one for the country and the international community should remain united in support of measures against the UNITA insurgency and to bring an end to the nightmare which has for so long impeded the progress of the country.

We are distressed by the continuing problems in the Horn of Africa and continue to support regional efforts towards peace-making, between Ethiopia and Eritrea and we welcome the OAU Framework Agreement which has been worked out to assist the parties to reach a settlement.

We urge the Secretary-General to continue to maintain close touch with the parties in all the areas of tension, with the aim of promoting peace and stability, and to foster a spirit of reconciliation so that African states may be able to concentrate their efforts in confronting the critical challenges of economic and social development.

In the Middle East, while the situation still remains troubling there are some signs of renewed hope with the revival of the peace process and the emergence of a more positive climate for making progress towards a settlement. We welcome the signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum earlier this month and urge the parties towards accommodation to seek to realise the legitimate rights of all parties as the basis for a just and durable peace. The challenge is formidable and a solution will require statesmanship and courage.

In South-East Asia the outbreak of violence in East Timor is a matter which has caused deep concern. As there is an obvious need for ensuring the safety of the inhabitants of the territory, we fully support the deployment of the international force which is now in the territory to maintain order. It is necessary now to contemplate the next step which will be to devise arrangements for the political future of the territory.

In our area of Latin America and the Caribbean there remain a number of unresolved territorial disputes but our expectation is that states in our region will use available mechanisms to resolve such disputes by peaceful means. In the Caribbean our efforts are directed towards developing greater integration both

within the Caribbean Community and within the wider ambit of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS). This is part of our regional effort towards establishing a regime of peace and cooperation in the Caribbean Sea. In this regard, I should express our on-going concern over the remaining remnants of Cold War politics in our region. The continuation of the embargo against Cuba is a source of tension and carries the risk of conflict which is particularly troubling for neighbouring states. In the spirit of the friendly relations we enjoy with Cuba and the United States, we call for dialogue and the normalisation of relations and for an end to policies of confrontation and exclusion.

Mr. President,

Small countries have an important interest in ensuring that peace and stability is a permanent feature of the world order. In the absence of military power we depend on diplomacy and on the United Nations, its machinery and international adherence to its principles to safeguard and protect those who are militarily weak. It is in our interest to seek to strengthen and uphold all the multilateral institutions dedicated to this effort. The Security Council which has such an important role in this structure should be given the fullest support in meeting its responsibilities. This is best achieved through the democratic participation of the UN membership in the work of the Council which serves to strengthen its effectiveness and to give it greater credibility within the international system.

Jamaica supports that process and aspires for membership of the Council for a two-year period beginning next year. We do so out of a motivation to make our contribution as a small state in the management of international peace and security. We are driven by a strong commitment to multilateralism, to upholding the principles of the Charter and a determination to exercise a careful and balanced judgement in relation to all issues affecting peace and security which may come before us.

It will be our goal to assist the Security Council to work effectively, and to act decisively. We will seek to involve the broader membership in its consultations and to influence the discharge of the Council's responsibilities with fairness and with full respect for the legitimate interests of all parties, within the broader interest of international peace and security.

The work of the United Nations in the area of humanitarian relief has always been an important part of its operations and this is the area in which its work has had the most direct impact and practical meaning at the people level. This is particularly so in the delivery of emergency relief in natural disasters. The increase in the scale and intensity of earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and famines in recent times has heightened on the system and there is obvious need to maintain capability and readiness in the relevant agencies. At the same

the same time, we should support the various initiatives for disaster prevention, including the enforcement of stricter building codes, improved drainage systems, the exchange of scientific knowledge, increased monitoring and use of early warning systems to protect ourselves and mitigate the damage.

Much more can be done to avert disasters in those areas where members have greater control and power. Man-made disasters create a tragic problem of refugees which is often the result of war, persecution, or political turmoil. The tragic plight of refugees uprooted from their homes and forced to flee is a sad and disturbing picture and even more so for the neighbouring states which are often poor countries which have not the means to handle heavy inflows. As we have seen from the Secretary-General's Report one of the distressing practices in recent conflicts has been the deliberate targetting of civilians and humanitarian workers. This unacceptable flouting of humanitarian norms is a matter of serious concern for us and indicate the need for further elaboration of principles of international humanitarian law applicable in the time of war.

Mr. President, our review of the state of the world in the economic, political and humanitarian dimensions suggests the need for greater effort in building political commitment and investing resources for achieving common goals. Too many of the old problems remain unresolved and our unity of purpose is too often compromised by political differences and considerations of narrow economic interests. At a time of increasing globalisation, the reality of interdependence should be leading us in the other direction - towards mutual respect, tolerance, understanding and partnership in a world of diversity for these are the true foundations of multilateralism. As we close this century and approach the new millenium, we should do so in the hope of greater achievements by acting in concert to uphold our ideals of humanity and to fight the common enemies of mankind - war, poverty, human suffering and injustice. This should be our firm resolve.

Thank you Mr. President.