



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT

BY

**THE HONOURABLE SEYMOUR MULLINGS, M.P.
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND
MINISTER OF LAND AND ENVIRONMENT**

AT THE

**SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR AN
OVERALL REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
HABITAT AGENDA**

New York, June 8, 2001

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Mr. President,

May I first join other delegations in congratulating you on your leadership of this Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly, dedicated to a review and appraisal of implementation of the HABITAT Agenda.

We meet to assess our stewardship in furthering the commitments which we made in Istanbul, and to examine afresh the strategies and mechanisms that will assure greater opportunity for all our peoples in the urban civilization of the future.

This meeting marks almost 25 years since HABITAT I. We, the international community, particularly the developing countries, continue to seek solutions to the major issues identified in the HABITAT Agenda, the most urgent being access to affordable land and shelter, access to credit and to appropriate technology. Several other inter-related issues have gained increasing importance. Urban governance, poverty eradication, urbanization, social integration and the support of disadvantaged groups, and local government reform are some of these areas.

Jamaica has utilized its National HABITAT Committee and several of its Ministries and agencies to plan and implement many aspects of the HABITAT Agenda. We have also formulated and begun to implement a number of major policies and programmes aimed at achieving the goal of sustainable human settlements development. The National Land Policy, the National Housing Policy, including a Joint Venture Policy for housing development, the National Industrial Policy and the Jamaican Environmental Action Programme represent key intervention areas in which the Government has taken action.

Prepared with the involvement of a broad cross-section of stakeholders, the policies have become the platform for enriched partnerships. They have brought together the resources and enterprise of the government and the private sector, and the innovativeness of civil society, NGOs and community groups.

This has been used to deal with a variety of problems, including many of those identified in HABITAT documents and programmes of action. We have learnt from the best practices of other countries and have developed some of our own. We are also establishing new local government structures to assist with planning for sustainable development at the local level.

We have also fostered participation, including NGO and community participation in our planning and development activities. We have implemented several projects dealing with the reorganization of squatted areas and the provision of land with secure tenure to many persons. We have begun a major island wide cadastral mapping programme of some 800,000 parcels of land, and we hope to clarify and register over 350,000 of those parcels. We continue to implement mitigation measures to address costly natural and manmade disasters. We have also begun a major inner city and urban renewal programme.

Yet today, our country is, like others, faced with the persistent problems of inadequate human, financial and technological resources. We continue to depend on grants and loans from developed countries and multilateral funding agencies. We in the developing world, however, need to make international donors and lenders understand that while problems can be generalized, cultural and other practices, norms and levels of education vary, and there are human faces to the issues.

The commitment and the enabling role of transnational corporations must be encouraged so that they can become more involved in the solutions. Developing countries should also continue to strengthen their self-sufficiency and self-reliance in dealing with the issues, and draw more on the innovativeness, initiative and capacity of our peoples.

The importance of a participatory approach to our development strategy must also be underscored. All citizens of our countries, including the youth, must be made to understand the problems that exist and the actions that must follow the decisions that we make at these meetings. If we do not involve all citizens in the search for solutions; if we do not commit to do whatever we can, however we can, even if it is incremental; if we do not become more self reliant, if we do not adopt a policy of more action and less talk, then at HABITAT III we may be forced to acknowledge that we have progressed little beyond where we are today.

Mr. President,

The decisions reached at Istanbul and those we will adopt today constitute a solid foundation for future progress. But they must be translated into concrete measures; into national policy; into new forms of international cooperation, if we are to achieve the worthy goals that we have set for ourselves. Let us therefore find the political will to meaningfully implement our agreed agendas and plans of action.