



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
HUMANITARIAN SEGMENT
15 – 17 JULY 2002**

STATEMENT BY

**MR. O'NEIL FRANCIS
FIRST SECRETARY
PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

ON

**STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION
OF EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**New York
17 July 2002**

Check Against Delivery

Mr President,

Let me first express my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on strengthening of the coordination of the humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. His report has provided an excellent basis for detailed assessment of the United Nations role in the area of humanitarian assistance and provides concrete proposals to guide future action.

Over the past decade, the frequency, scope and severity of natural disasters have increased significantly with devastating effects on millions, particularly in the developing world. Climate change has played a major role in these growing environmental challenges which have undermined development particularly in those countries with limited capacity to respond effectively. Today more than ever, effective and integrated humanitarian responses to natural disasters and to the tragedies of armed conflicts is vital both for those countries immediately affected and for the international community in general.

The interconnectedness of natural disasters and of complex humanitarian emergencies was cogently highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report. The regional repercussions of these humanitarian crises clearly point to the urgent need for strengthened regional structures and the importance of linking early warning responses and preparedness capacities at the regional level. We therefore strongly support the recommendation by the Secretary-General for the General Assembly and the ECOSOC to support regional organisations in an effort to strengthen capacities to respond to complex humanitarian crises and natural disasters and to report on practical steps in this regard.

Projections that the world will face an increasing number of climatically related natural disasters is particularly significant for small island developing states (SIDS) like those in the Caribbean region. SIDS are particularly vulnerable to natural disasters given the small size of their economies. The devastation at the national level that can occur from natural disasters represents a serious threat to sustainable development given the limited response capacity and resource base of SIDS. We therefore welcome the planning processes being undertaken by UN agencies to allow the identification of key facilities that can release resources to respond to disasters and identify areas where national and local capacities should be strengthened. This will require improved contingency planning and preparedness and increased attention to the coordination of efforts among different humanitarian actors.

The ongoing large scale humanitarian operations in conflict zones highlights the changed environment in which humanitarian assistance is provided. Central to the United Nation's role is the need for crisis prevention and the adoption of measures to address root causes of crises before they develop. ECOSOC has a key role in supporting, through social and development activities within its mandate, efforts to prevent the emergence of conflict as a critical strategy in addressing the growing complex humanitarian emergencies.

The ability of the humanitarian community to respond effectively to humanitarian emergencies depends to a significant degree on their ability to reach vulnerable populations. It is regrettable that despite the continued efforts by the international community to address the deliberate targeting of civilians in conflict areas, innocent women, children, refugees and other vulnerable groups remain targets of warring parties. This points to an urgent need to promote respect for international humanitarian and human rights law.

Every effort should be made to cooperate with other organs of the UN system to improve the environment for the safe and secure provision of humanitarian assistance by improving legal and physical protection for humanitarian personnel. We therefore support the Secretary-general's recommendation that special effort be made to call on armed groups to respect the provisions of international law in particular by allowing safe and sustained access to the vulnerable by humanitarian workers. In this regard, we stress the importance of full adherence to the UN Convention on the Safety and Security of United Nations and Associated Personnel and express support for an expansion in its scope of application.

The transition from relief to development is particularly relevant when addressing humanitarian assistance and requires urgent and concerted effort to move as quickly as possible into a comprehensive humanitarian and development assistance programme to reduce future risk. We therefore wish to stress the importance of encouraging humanitarian strategies to identify and support engagement with local structures and institutions as a means of assisting the transition from relief to development.

Jamaica supports the continued use of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) as a coordination, strategic planning and advocacy tool. The steady decline in the proportion of humanitarian assistance to the CAP is therefore a matter of primary concern pointing to the need for ongoing evaluation and review of CAP modalities. In this regard, we expect that this debate will serve as a catalyst for identifying ways of improving policy coherence, resource mobilization and operational efficiency.

Thank you