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SPEECH DELIVERED BY HON. K.D. KNIGHT,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE
TO THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS ON
THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 2002

Hon. Minister of State, Ben Clare
Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, H. E. Fernando Pardo
Permanent Secretary Stafford Neil
Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Under Secretaries and other members of staff of this Ministry
Honourable Representatives of the Consular Corps

Ladies and Gentlemen

For several of us, this is our first experience of the Foreign Minister's briefing during Diplomatic Week. As a newcomer myself, let me hasten to welcome the first-timers among us and to say that I am happy for this opportunity to meet you as a group for the first time since my assumption of the office of Foreign Minister.

This fourth Diplomatic Week coincides with the start of the year of the 40th Anniversary of the establishment of the Jamaican Foreign Service. In the period since 1962, the Service has striven for excellence, despite its small size. Important in this, has been the commitment of staff at all levels. Their promotion of Jamaica's interests continues to reap significant benefits for the island's development.

Your Excellencies might recall that within days of my assumption of office in this Ministry, I was called to duty in the United Nations Security Council in November, when it was Jamaica's turn to chair the Council. For me it was a great honour to chair the Council at a time when the world was focused on action that it should take to roll back the scourge of terrorism.

International Terrorism

The horror of the 11 September acts of terrorism will remain indelibly etched in our minds. It drove the determined collective response of the international community to eradicate this threat to world peace and to individual human rights.

We were agreed that the perpetrators and those in collusion with them must be brought to justice.

We were also agreed that global collaboration was necessary to deny terrorists access to financing, arms and ammunitions and to safe haven in our territories. Thus, there was consensus on the need to strengthen the international legal framework in the fight against terrorism and the implementation of pertinent Security Council Resolutions, especially 1373 of 28 September 2001.

I urge the international community to increase its focus on combating terrorism by dealing with its root causes, even as we act on other fronts to defeat it in all its manifestations. Global equity and justice must be pursued in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter. Greater international collaboration in the struggle against abject poverty, deprivation and marginalization, must see the allocation of adequate resources to the pertinent bilateral and multilateral programmes. Too often, has the international community adopted declarations and plans of action whose usefulness is undermined by the inadequacy of resources for their implementation. We are concerned that the credibility of the UN in the performance of its mandate for peace and security is being undermined by the impunity of action of certain states, despite sustained efforts within the Security Council.

As we fight international terrorism we must ensure that no region is put at risk especially those, which lack the wherewithal to repel initial attacks.

Global strategies to defeat terrorism must also address its links with transnational organized crime and the increased criminal activity facilitated by information and communications technology. The threats to stability caused by drug traffickers and arms smugglers and their wanton disregard for life must be perceived and dealt with as part and parcel of the global phenomenon of terrorism.

Disarmament

The realities of the threat posed by international terrorism gave us cause to renew our thinking about global disarmament. Of particular relevance is the global agenda for security against biological and chemical weapons. Each state, and particularly those which possess such weapons or the capability for their production, has a responsibility to ensure strict compliance with the pertinent Conventions. Critical to this are effective international monitoring mechanisms, to which end the full cooperation of all states is essential.

Of particular relevance to Jamaica and our Caricom partners was the UN Conference on the Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Light weapons which took place in July last year. We remain concerned that all states should implement the outcome document for the enhancement of global security.

The UN Security Council

On December 31, Jamaica concluded its second term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. As with our first term, these last two years have been very challenging, as the Security Council sought to restore peace to areas of conflict.

Peace in the Middle East has remained elusive, with every step towards peace being jeopardized by the continuing cycle of violence in the region and the attendant wanton loss of civilian lives.

As a member of the Non Aligned caucus in the Security Council, Jamaica sought to find ways to bring an end to the violence, including the deployment of an Observer Force, thus permitting the resumption of negotiations between Israel and Palestine. Today, the Middle East remains a dangerous flashpoint. The UN must continue to be engaged in the search for solutions. It is urgent that both Israel and Palestine de-escalate the tensions and end the cycle of violence and reprisal, which threatens to destroy the process for peace.

In the final year of our two terms on the Council, the situation in Afghanistan arose as an urgent issue on the Council's agenda. We demitted office on both occasions with that situation unresolved. There is no denying that seeds of that first crisis of 1980 contributed to the crisis of 2001. We hope that the action being pursued now will prevent the resurgence of future violent crises in that troubled country.

Some measured success was achieved by the Council in these past two years. We acknowledge the progress achieved in East Timor, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Sierra Leone and more recently, Burundi. Sanctions imposed against the Sudan and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, were lifted. There is need for the continued engagement of the Council and commitment of its membership, in areas where peace and security remain elusive, such as in Western Sahara, where Jamaica remains committed to the implementation of the Settlement Plan, in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in Iraq.

New themes in the Security Council's agenda, which were advanced over the past two years included the protection of civilians in armed conflict, in particular the impact of such conflict on women and children. Under Jamaica's chairmanship in July 2000 and November 2001, useful work was accomplished on this theme. Also under our chairmanship, the Security Council's working group on peacekeeping operations successfully concluded its mandate. Other new themes examined were the linkage between the exploitation of the natural resources of territories in conflict and the persistence of such conflict, as well as the serious impact on global development and security of the HIV-AIDS pandemic.

Our experiences on the Security Council have strengthened our support for its reform to make it more democratic and transparent in its decision-making and to ensure adequate representation of the community of nations. We are concerned about the use of the veto and believe that no reform process is complete should the exercise of the veto power remain unchanged. Therefore, we regret the determination of the five permanent members to permit no reduction of their privileges.

I extend Jamaica's congratulations to Mexico who replaced us on the Security Council. And on behalf of the Government of Jamaica, to express our gratitude to those member states of the Council, especially those represented in Jamaica, for their support during the period of our membership.

Other UN Matters

In the interest of time, I shall refer to only a few other UN-related matters.

It is now 20 years since the Convention on the Law of the Sea was signed in Jamaica. UNCLOS entered into force in 1994. The confirmation of Jamaica as the Headquarters of the International Authority engaged our concerted action to provide a building for the offices of the Authority, now headquartered at the refurbished offices at 14-16 Port Royal Street, Kingston. Negotiations are now ongoing with the United Nations for the creation of a "UN House" at the complex.

This year will see the convocation of four international conferences under the aegis of the UN, each of which will impact on international socio-economic development.

I refer first of all to the World Summit on Children, the Preparatory Committee of which Jamaica was honoured to chair. We anticipate the adoption of a Plan of Action which will foster full respect for the rights of the child; international collaboration for their advancement and their protection from exploitation and the abuse and victimization of armed conflict.

We look forward to the International Conference on Financing for Development in Mexico, which provides an opportunity to forge consensus on the reform of the international economic and financial architecture, to make it more supportive of long-term global development.

We consider the impact of September 11 on the global economy to be such that action towards greater equity can no longer be deferred. And in this regard no country can be lukewarm especially the major economic powers.

Equally important is the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which will be held in South Africa in August. Jamaica emphasizes the correlation of economic development, social progress and environmental protection as mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development. We trust, therefore, that the Summit will see a renewed political commitment to the full implementation of Agenda 21.

In June, the deferred World Food Summit, will be convened to tackle food insecurity and malnourishment, which still plague many developing countries, despite the commitments of the 1996 Summit. This year's Summit will only be successful to the extent that adequate resources are provided. We applaud, therefore, the vision of the FAO in the creation of a Trust Fund, which we hope will be generously supported by the International Community.

The World Trade Organization

Among the most important conferences held last year was the 4th WTO Ministerial Meeting in Doha, Qatar.

The emergence of an agreement in Doha, after the failure of Seattle, sent a positive signal that a multilateral, rules based, trading system continues to be supported by all. The agreed outcome also represented significant compromise on the part of many, particularly developing countries.

In this context, Jamaica welcomes the emphasis placed on the need for special and differential treatment for developing countries, as well as the need for increased technical assistance and capacity building.

This clearly signals that the WTO is now recognizing the concerns of many developing countries which are yet to realize the benefits of greater trade liberalization, and that it is beginning to place a greater focus on developmental concerns. A litmus test of commitment will be the provision of the funding necessary for increased technical assistance and capacity building.

Of special importance to Jamaica is the decision to establish a work programme in the WTO, which will examine issues related to the trade of small economies, in order to assist in their fuller integration into the world economy. Jamaica and other CARICOM countries have long argued that this issue must be addressed by the WTO.

We note with satisfaction the agreement to grant developing countries, such as Jamaica, a longer time frame in which they can apply subsidies/tax incentives in specific areas, such as free zones. However, there is need for further progress on difficulties faced by developing countries in the implementation of existing WTO agreements

We are also generally satisfied with the expanded and balanced mandate for the ongoing negotiations in agriculture, which together with those in services, began in 2000. Jamaica will continue to participate actively, given the importance of these two areas to our economy.

Jamaica attaches special importance to the decisions on the Agreement on the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) and Public Health. These decisions will allow countries, such as Jamaica and others in the Caribbean, the region with the second highest rate of HIV infection in the world, to source the cheapest drugs available in the international market, without breaching patent rights of large pharmaceutical firms.

We are particularly pleased that the WTO waivers requested for the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement – the Cotonou Agreement and the EU Revised Banana Regime - were granted in Doha. This guarantees some certainty in our trading relations with the European Union.

The expanded WTO work programme will present enormous challenges for Jamaica and our CARICOM partners, particularly over the next three years. Therefore we shall need to identify additional resources, draw upon national and regional capacities, and strengthen public/private sector collaboration, in order to ensure that our interests are fully represented in the negotiations in Geneva, and also to implement new agreements. It is our hope that many of the countries, which are represented here today, will increase their support of this process.

ACP-EU Relations

Following the signing of the Cotonou Agreement in 2000, the Everything But Arms initiative emerged. This initiative was welcomed, as it was designed to assist the poorest in the international community. However, it was our view that this access should not have been granted at the expense of other developing countries, particularly those where widespread poverty is still a major concern and constraint to development. The compromise, which was finally arrived at in July 2001, took account of the legitimate concerns of the non least-developed, developing countries, which are members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group.

The year 2001 also saw the establishment of one of the new elements in the Cotonou Agreement – the ACP-EU Trade Ministerial Committee. Jamaica had the honour to be the first Chairman of the ACP side and continues to be an active member of this Committee.

We wish to express our continued appreciation to the European Union, its delegation here in Kingston and representatives of the member-states for their continued support to Jamaica's development process.

During the year under review, a number of areas including Poverty Alleviation, Infrastructure Improvement and Strengthening, Trade Promotion and Institutional Strengthening and Modernization of Government Agencies, received substantial support and funding from both the European Union and its member-states.

The Free Trade Area of the Americas

We welcomed the renewed recognition of the concerns of small economies at the Quebec Summit of Hemispheric States in April 2001. This summit also set the date for completing negotiations on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) for January 2005. However, this new completion date, added to the expanded work programme in the WTO, will greatly challenge our limited resources.

CARICOM Single Market and Economy

In 2001, the nine Protocols amending the Treaty of Chaguaramas which had been previously finalized, were incorporated into the Revised Treaty, thus paving the way for ratification at the national level in 2002.

CARICOM member-states completed their internal consultations on the new trade in services regime, which will see the progressive removal of barriers to the establishment of CARICOM enterprises throughout the Community, the free movement of selected categories of workers, service providers and very importantly, capital. We expect that CARICOM Heads of Government will sign off on this regime to be phased in over a five (5) year period, at their meeting next month.

CARICOM's trade and economic relations with the wider region were boosted by the entry into force of the CARICOM/Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement on December 1, 2001.

Jamaica Trade and Adjustment Team

In response to the need to deepen and widen the national consultative process on global and regional trade matters, the Jamaica Trade and Adjustment Team was established in January 2001.

Extensive consultations were held throughout the country to develop a new trade policy, which would more effectively confront the challenges of globalization and the new trading environment. This policy was presented to Parliament at the end of October last year. A great challenge to us will be to educate the public on the significance and impact of global trade liberalization

The Commonwealth

Jamaica finds much support for the development concerns of small economies within the Commonwealth, both at the policy level as well as in the provision of technical assistance. Our membership of the Commonwealth is an important plank of our foreign policy.

At the upcoming Heads of Government Meeting to be held in Australia in March, Heads will deliberate on the report of the High Level Review Group, which was mandated to propose recommendations for enhancing the Commonwealth's relevance and effectiveness. Jamaica considers the Commonwealth to be well placed as a force for democracy and good governance, for consensus building and for targeted technical assistance for sustainable development.

We therefore trust that in Australia, Heads will act to reinforce the Commonwealth's capacity for action in these fields.

The Secretary General of the Commonwealth visits next week and we look forward to our talks with him.

NAM

Later this year, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) will convene its Summit Meeting in Jordan, preceded by the Ministerial meeting in South Africa. The factors which defined current global political relations, the state of the international economic environment, the challenges faced by countries as they seek internal stability and development are among the issues which are expected to occupy the deliberations in those fora. Jamaica, as an active member of the NAM, believes it important that the Movement continues its engagement in those discussions, and promotes appropriate responses to the new and emerging challenges in international relations.

Bilateral Relations

Last year saw much activity at the bilateral level. Against the background of a rapidly changing environment, we greatly value the constancy of the excellent relations, which we enjoy with many states, particularly with those represented by resident Missions.

In the **Asia and Pacific** region, our relations with India, Japan, the Peoples Republic of China and the Republic of Korea continue to be very active. Several important aspects of our national development programme benefit from the assistance we continue to receive from these countries. We endeavour to develop our relations with other important countries in the region.

Malaysia's participation in our Highway 2000 project demonstrates our continuing efforts to boost relations with other countries of that region. My predecessor Foreign Minister Robertson paid an official visit to Indonesia in May last year, at the time of the G15 Summit in Jakarta. A business delegation, led by the Hon. Philip Paulwell, visited India and Hong Kong last year on matters related to commerce and information and communications technology.

Your Excellencies, Jamaica condemns the terrorist acts perpetrated recently against India. We are deeply concerned by the increased tensions between India and Pakistan and urge that their long-standing dispute be resolved through a process of bilateral negotiations.

With Europe, Jamaica's relations are traditionally strong, as a result of our partnership with the European Union and also our historic ties with several European States, in particular the United Kingdom.

High-level official visits were exchanged between Jamaica and Spain, the UK, Turkey and Italy in the course of 2001. Those at the Head of Government level were:

- The first ever visit by a Jamaican Prime Minister to Spain, where P.M. Patterson held useful talks with the President of the Spanish Government and met with potential Spanish investors, in February. Among the results are the RIU Hotel in Negril and agreement that the 2nd

Caricom/Spain Summit will be held in Madrid this year, at the time of the EU/LAC Summit.

- The July official visit of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, which not only provided the opportunity for intensive discussions on UK/Jamaica relations, but also for consultations with Caricom Heads of Government.

Other bilateral activity included Belgium's financial support for our transportation sector; Germany's continuing assistance in health, infrastructure and vocational education; France's strong political support for the successful French tender for the first tranche of the Highway 2000 project and the encouraging, new commercial ventures with the Netherlands.

Jamaica is pleased that Russia has maintained its human resource development programme, the anchor of its cooperation with Jamaica. This year should see renewed efforts to follow-up on the initiatives which resulted from the official visit to Russia paid by then Foreign Minister Robertson in June 2000.

Pursuant to our policy to enhance relations with countries of the Middle East, my predecessor also paid an official visit to Kuwait in February of last year. In June, a Parliamentary delegation went to Kuwait, which is a major partner in our road building and improvement programme.

Efforts to deepen relations with African states will continue and be enhanced. We are pleased with the mutual political and diplomatic support in international organizations. We look forward to reviving technical cooperation programmes in the context of the agreements for Joint Commissions, which exist between Jamaica and some states of Africa. In this regard, we note with satisfaction that the Nigerian Technical Aid Corps Programme will resume its activities in Jamaica during this year.

The deepening of bilateral relations with South Africa is also an important priority. We are currently engaged in exploring cooperation initiatives as well as the identification of trade and investment opportunities.

In the Americas, our strongest links continue to be with our Caribbean partners, Canada and the USA.

Our regional integration movement, Caricom, is the forum for much of the interaction between its member states, with regional decisions defining, to a large extent, bilateral activity. I look forward to attending my first series of Caricom meetings later this month, preparatory to the 13th Inter-sessional Meeting of Heads, which will take place in Belize in February. There, Heads will also meet with their Central American counterparts, to advance relations between both sub-regions.

Jamaica played an active role in the establishment of the Caricom Office in Haiti, with a view to assisting with the consolidation of Caricom/Haiti relations and to support Haiti's efforts to strengthen its democracy.

Elsewhere in the Caribbean, our relations with Cuba proceed apace, both bilaterally and through Caricom. Last June, the review meeting of the Cuba/Jamaica Joint Commission coincided with the official visit to Kingston of Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque. In November, we received Deputy Foreign Minister Pedro Nunez Mosquera.

We welcomed the upgrading of the representation of the Dominican Republic to the level of Ambassador and commend ongoing action to boost bilateral trade.

The USA and Canada are home to thousands of Jamaicans who contribute both to the development of their host country and to Jamaica. We continue to value the historic friendship on which our relations with both Canada and the USA are founded. From both countries, Jamaica receives significant support for priority programmes spanning a wide variety of sectors in our national development.

We have worked well with each Embassy from Latin America to advance their respective country's relations with Jamaica, particularly through programmes, which engender greater people-to-people contact and understanding, as well as appreciation of our respective cultures, including training in Spanish. We will continue to work toward closer economic relations with Brazil, Peru and the entire South American bloc.

With continental Latin America, the official visits that took place last year were:

- Prime Minister Patterson's visit to Costa Rica in March, which coincided with the II Meeting of the Jamaica - Costa Rica Joint Commission;
- The visit of Colombian Vice President H.E. Gustavo Bell Lemus at the time of 3rd Meeting of the Jamaica/Colombia Neighbourhood Commission.
- The Argentine High level delegation, for horizontal cooperation programme planning in March.
- The Chilean High level delegation from the Agency for International Cooperation in August, also for programme planning. And
- The visit by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Honduras for talks on Maritime Cooperation

We were happy to welcome the Ambassador of Panama, consequent on Panama's decision to upgrade its representation in Jamaica.

Let me here note Jamaica's satisfaction with last August's decision by the Government of Mexico and Venezuela to renew the San Jose Accord. We were also pleased with the first renewal of the Caracas Energy Accord on the occasion of the III Summit of the Association of Caribbean States, which took place in Isla de Margarita, Venezuela.

ACS

The III ACS Summit saw the signature of the Convention establishing the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean, an instrument to guide the sustainable development of the resources of the Tourism Sector.

Jamaica continues to collaborate in all action for the consolidation of the ACS as an important regional body for the promotion of integration and development.

OAS

In April the HPM led Jamaica's delegation to the excellently organized Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, Canada.

The many initiatives and commitments adopted by the Summit and contained in the Quebec Declaration and Plan of Action have further opened up possibilities for concerted action on essential issues such as democracy, human rights, economic integration, sustainable development and the fight against drugs, terrorism and corruption. The OAS continues to assume additional responsibilities for the implementation of the agreements reached in the Summit of the Americas process.

We maintain our active participation in the several fora of the OAS, with a special emphasis on democratic stability, security and development issues.

Jamaica's Marine Policy

This Ministry provides the Secretariat for the National Council on Ocean and Coastal Zone Management, which promotes the education of local communities in the preservation of our coastal and marine resources. On 8 November 2001, Minister of State Ben Clare launched the Green Paper "Towards a National Policy on Ocean and Coastal Zone Management". To date, three out of eight public consultations planned across the island as part of the process towards a White Paper, have been held.

We recognize the importance of co-management between the Government of Jamaica, Civil Society and the NGOs in protecting the marine environment.

Jamaica Ship Registry

Prime Minister P.J. Patterson officially launched Jamaica's International Ship Registry on October 4, 2000. Since then, through the Maritime Authority of Jamaica, we have encouraged ship owners worldwide to register their vessels here.

The Government of Jamaica is committed to ensuring strict compliance with IMO standards, as well as, the preservation of the high standards of the Registry.

London Convention of the International Maritime Organization

Jamaica is committed to the promotion of the aims and objectives of the IMO London Convention in prevention and controlling all sources of pollution to the marine environment. Therefore, we have agreed to host the London Convention Scientific Group Meeting, as well as the Workshop on marine Pollution Prevention and Environment Management in Ports in the Wider Caribbean Region from the 20-31 May 2002.

Concluding Remarks

Jamaica deeply appreciates its relations with all the states represented here today. In particular, we are pleased to be host to such a fine Diplomatic Corps.

We anticipate the challenges, which will flow from the many demands on this Ministry's human and material resources, as we pursue our multilateral and bilateral obligations during this year. We look forward to working closely with you as we strive together to achieve our mutual objectives for global peace, security and development.

To all of you, I convey our best wishes for a productive and satisfying year and for the prosperity and peace of your respective countries.

I urge you, on your visit to St. Elizabeth tomorrow to see places such as Lover's Leap. Enjoy your stay in Jamaica.

End

MFAFT
January 16, 2002