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**STATEMENT MADE BY JAMAICA AT THE FOURTH  
UN OPEN-ENDED INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON  
OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA  
JUNE 05, 2003**

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**Protection of Vulnerable Marine Eco-systems**

The delegation of Jamaica wishes to thank Mrs. Diane Ponce Nava for her presentation on Coral Reefs. We also wish to thank the delegation of Norway for the information given on cold water species of coral reef. Coral reefs comprise one of the more important marine eco-systems in the Caribbean region; therefore we can fully identify with the issues raised in the presentation by Mrs. Nava on problems resulting from damage to coral reefs.

We wish to express our appreciation for the work being done on coral reef preservation and protection by the UNEP regional office located in Jamaica and also by the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI).

Apart from external sources which harm our coral reefs, we also recognize in the region that these reefs are threatened by unacceptable levels of land-based sources of pollution and there is increasing awareness and regional activities to counter this problem. In this context, I wish to express appreciation for the recent activity entitled "*White Water to Blue Water Initiative*" being promoted by the United States in the region. Its objective includes the strengthening of

national and regional institutional capacity to implement cross-sectoral watershed and marine ecosystem management.

On the general issue of protection of vulnerable marine ecosystems, I wish to make reference to the issue of transportation of hazardous waste. The Caribbean region is a major transshipment area and as such there are vessels occasionally carrying toxic and other kinds of hazardous material. Spills and groundings do occur and have had negative impacts on the marine ecosystems including fish kills, habitat loss, increased turbidity, etc. Although this matter was raised by other delegations in the discussions under Panel A, I wish to reiterate the importance of this issue to the region and to recall the recommendations made by Mexico which highlighted the need for further work to be done through the IMO to establish a mechanism to ensure compliance in areas such as compensation for environmental damage and the development of contingency plans in cases of accidents.

Tourism represents a major economic activity for most of the Caribbean and there are direct and indirect impacts that occur as a result of use and overuse of the marine environment and its natural resources. The region is in need of assistance to undertake natural resource assessment where there is damage and also to undertake carrying capacity studies on our vulnerable marine ecosystems.