PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

MRS. DIEDRE N. MILLS
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON BEHALF OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

ON AGENDA ITEM 22: ERADICATION OF POVERTY AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

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FINAL TEXT

Madam Chair,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on agenda item 24 (Eradication of Poverty and other Development Issues) and to align the statement with the statements delivered on behalf of the following groups: the Group of 77 and China, the Alliance of Small Island States.

We wish also to thank the Secretary General for the reports prepared under this agenda item. Our consideration of these reports must be placed in the context of global economic uncertainty, and, in the case of the Caribbean, increasing exogenous shocks that place sustainable development including the eradication of poverty further away from our reach.

The report on the Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty provides a macro level snapshot of the state of progress and in some cases regression with efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger. However, it does not provide the level of information as CARICOM requested during last year's debate, specifically on the state of poverty eradication in SIDS and how the UN system is targeting SIDS with their efforts towards poverty eradication in a rapidly changing global scenario.

CARICOM reiterates its appeal that any future reporting on implementation of the plan of action for the Third Decade should have a SIDS specific focus.

We also would like to propose that future reports, particularly their conclusions and recommendations, should reflect the implications of the findings of recent reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other global scientific bodies for poverty eradication in the Decade.

These scientific reports reveal that if we are unable to limit global warming to 1.5°C within a decade or so, we will irrevocably compromise our ability to reduce the number of people exposed to climate risks and vulnerable to poverty and further compound our ability to lessen the risks of poor people to experience food and water insecurity, adverse health impacts and economic losses, particularly in regions, like my own, that already face development challenges.

Even if we get on track to 1.5°C, that degree of warming would still pose heightened risks to eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities, and ensuring human and ecosystem well- being. As the IPCC finds, warming of 1.5°C is not considered 'safe' for most nations and poses significant risks to natural and human systems as compared to the current warming of 1°C. The impacts of 1.5°C of warming would disproportionately affect disadvantaged and vulnerable populations through food insecurity, higher food prices, income losses, lost livelihood opportunities, adverse

health impacts and population displacements. Some of the worst impacts on sustainable development are expected to be felt among agricultural and coastal dependent livelihoods, indigenous people, children and the elderly, poor labourers, poor urban dwellers in African cities, and people and ecosystems in the Arctic and Small Island Developing States.

In short, whether or not we make progress on eradication of poverty in this Third United Nations Decade will depend on whether or not we make progress in effectively and aggressively confronting climate change. It is, therefore, essential that in this Decade we, together with the UN system, take an integrated approach to address the interactions between climate change, climate responses and sustainable development with a view to identifying synergies and potential trade offs of climate action with the SDGs, and, importantly, the potential policy responses thereto.

Madam Chair,

In the Caribbean, as a result of the persistent climate impacts and macroeconomic, productivity challenges -- some of which arise as a result of natural disasters, social problems have intensified throughout our region. The most pressing of these include poverty and inequality, healthcare, education, unemployment and crime.

The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) recently reported that in the last decade, high unemployment rates have persisted across most of the Region with unemployment rates ranging from around 4% to over 20%. Youth unemployment is presently at nearly 25% for the Region. The primary factors related to the high levels of unemployment include the regional economic conditions and the lack of relevant skills, training and knowledge for the job market.

At the current unsustainable levels, youth unemployment and underemployment pose a serious risk to productivity and potential output. These effects could be magnified for decades to come, if unemployed youth are unable to find jobs and cannot navigate the labour market. The CDB concludes that, ultimately, this traps those who are already living in or vulnerable to poverty and adds to the national social and economic costs of poverty and unemployment.

While indigence levels have fallen for most CARICOM Members since the early 2000s, it is estimated that over 40% of the aggregate population still lives in poverty. Some countries have particularly high levels of indigence, as much as 60%, and this is without accounting for the non - income dimensions of poverty.

Regional poverty and rising unemployment have helped to fuel rising crime rates across the Region. For the already poor and vulnerable, the situation is even more acute and lends itself to

the perpetuation of violent crimes. This in turn has led to increased citizen insecurity and the rising cost of policing, while threatening tourism income.

Other looming socio-economic challenges for the region are population decline due to lower fertility rates and net positive emigration rates, as well as an ageing population. It is estimated that the Caribbean is ageing at one of the fastest rates among the developing world. This could translate into rising social welfare payments or loss of the potential productive capacity of the region's economies.

Madam Chair,

Having regard for the feedback loop these challenges present for productivity and economic output of our economies, CARICOM is sparing no effort to wrest our populations out of the poverty trap through targeted approaches to the myriad social challenges our Members face.

Our young people are critical assets to our national and regional development. CARICOM, therefore, is currently developing a youth mainstreaming strategy to multisectoral planning and action intended to realise youth and children development outcomes in its Member States. This includes the revision and strengthening of the CARICOM Youth Development Action Plan.

CARICOM is also pursuing youth entrepreneurial development as a new approach to countering youth unemployment and mitigating harmful behaviours such as drug abuse, crime and violence. Through its Creativity for Business Employment Opportunity programme, the Region aims to inspire ingenuity in young people who have been in conflict with the law and in so doing support their reintegration into the productive sectors of their societies.

Alongside our efforts to achieve development of our young people, we are progressively working towards achieving gender equality. CARICOM is undertaking consultations on the development of a Regional Gender Equality Strategy, which will support a coordinated approach to achieving gender equality, equity and the empowerment of all women and girls in the Region. The Region takes a comprehensive approach to gender equality by engaging men and boys in this regard.

In order to promote overall human resource development, CARICOM adopted a 2030 Human Resource Development Strategy which provides a blueprint for Members to develop their human resources development sector plans and aims to a converged approach to addressing and advancing education and training. Through the CARICOM Secretariat, efforts are underway to foster the harmonisation of national qualification systems to promote migration management and governance.

Our ability to systematically treat and respond to our social problems depend on timely data capture and analysis, which can be used to develop and fund effective and evidence-based policies. We view data and knowledge management, therefore, as a critical enabler for regional development and our region's progress in addressing social and economic challenges. The region is looking to enhance collaboration with the United Nations and other institutions and partners to improve management by results. We are also strengthening and improving the availability of statistics for evidence-based decision-making in the region through CARICOM's recently approved Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics.

Madam Chair,

CARICOM looks forward to continued engagement with all partners to enhance regional efforts for poverty eradication. Since these efforts must be taken together with our other efforts to improve the health of our environment and the performance of our economies, we are particularly keen to see a more integrated, science-based approach in the UN systems' implementation of the Plan of Action for the Third Decade. As is evident in the Caribbean, progress in one area is only as good as progress in another. We will not be able to realize the potential of our efforts to poverty eradication if we do not carefully consider what impacts other factors, whether macroeconomic, social or environmental can have on those efforts and the impacts our efforts for poverty eradication can have for our economy and our environment.

I thank you.