



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

SPEAKING NOTES

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**TOPIC: CLIMATE AND WEATHER SERVICES FOR EARLY
WARNING IN SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**

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FINAL TEXT

Excellencies, distinguished panelists, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

- It is an honour to join my colleague, Ambassador Jukka Salovaara, in welcoming you to this side event, at which I anticipate robust discussion on the need to improve the capacity of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) for multi-hazard early warning systems.
- Climate change continues to increase the frequency and severity of weather and climate events in many SIDS - flash floods, typhoons, drought, cyclones. This not only increases our vulnerability by damaging our ecosystems and physical infrastructure, but it destroys our livelihoods.
- No other group of nations is more vulnerable to the devastating effects of climate change than SIDS, which compounds the unique set of developmental challenges that we grapple with, such as our small size, remoteness, narrow export and resource base, and exposure to external economic shocks.

- It is critical, therefore, for us to be equipped with the expertise and technology that we need to make accurate climate predictions. These predictions will impact our ability to manage climate-related risks to our economies, while maximizing opportunities presented by favourable climactic conditions.
- It stands to reason that if we have a hurricane barrelling down towards us, the more advanced the warning, the more prepared we can be. The same is true for climate events. If we can anticipate the onset of drought, the longer we will have to prepare and the more effective we can be at preventing damage and mitigating those impacts.
- Roughly 90 per cent of Jamaica's GDP is produced within our coastal zones. This makes our key industries and over half of our population vulnerable to hurricanes, tropical storms, sea level rise, and land loss. We therefore have to confront the risk and realities of climate change daily.

- We are fortunate that the end users of climate information, which include small-scale farmers, have been able in the recent past to benefit from climate forecasting services that directly support our productive sectors. For instance, since 2012, Jamaica has been grappling with the coffee leaf rust epidemic, which is caused by a fungal pathogen.
- The first widespread outbreak affected more than one-third of coffee plants across the island, resulting in millions of dollars in lost revenues for the sector. The emergence and spread of the disease have been linked to factors including that include changing climatic conditions and the impact of extreme weather events.
- As part of its response, Jamaica's Blue Mountain Coffee Industry is combining social science with the latest developments in climate forecasting as part of an innovative approach to boost production and reduce the impacts of the coffee leaf rust disease.
- Jamaica's honey industry has also benefited from the reliable climate forecast information provided to beekeepers

by the Meteorological Service of Jamaica and the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology.

- The performance of honeybees is very sensitive to weather and climatic conditions, it is critical for beekeepers to receive accurate forecasting in order for them to mitigate adverse climate effects and allow maximum production levels when conditions are favourable. For instance, advance warning of above-normal rainfall gives farmers valuable time needed to prepare for key activities such as bee feeding.
- Notwithstanding these positive developments, we are faced with the fact that many of our meteorological services require investment in infrastructure, technology and expertise in order to protect our vulnerable island communities and economies. Greater investment will further strengthen our vital weather and climate services, especially our climate forecasting services, and ensure that years of progress towards sustainable development are not lost due to weather events and climate change.
- As we contend with high levels of vulnerability to numerous hydro-meteorological and other hazards, we have been

making steady progress with the development of early-warning systems. This has included improvements to our observational network with the supplementing of manual rain-gauges with automatic multi-sensor weather stations, the modernization of radar surveillance capabilities, and the introduction of satellite communication systems.

- In this regard, we are extremely grateful to the Finnish Meteorological Institute for its work with Caribbean SIDSs on improving the capacity for multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk reduction, and on the development of quality management systems.
- I look forward to hearing from our panel about the technological advances that have been made in climate and weather prediction. I am also keen to hear of the ways in which SIDS can be supported in enabling early action to mitigate the impacts of climate and weather events, particularly in the midst of the ongoing climate emergency and COVID-19 pandemic.