



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

STATEMENT BY

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE KAMINA JOHNSON SMITH
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE**

**AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE ECOSOC HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF)
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**THEME: "SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT RECOVERY FROM THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC THAT PROMOTES THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL
DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE AND
EFFECTIVE PATH FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE 2030 AGENDA IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE DECADE OF ACTION AND DELIVERY FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

ON

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Final text

Mr President,

The economic dislocation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the unique development challenges faced by Jamaica and other highly-indebted Small-Island Developing States. The scale of the disruption threatens to derail Jamaica's advances towards the UN 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have long been mainstreamed into our *Vision 2030, National Development Plan*. [We however give thanks for our resilience as a people and are committed to doing our best by them in working to recover stronger.

For context, prior to the pandemic, due to balanced and well-crafted social and fiscal policies, Jamaica had been experiencing an improved macroeconomic environment, significantly lower levels of public debt, historically low rates of unemployment including a narrowed gender unemployment gap, and renewed confidence in the economy.

This environment augured well for advancement on several SDGs, including the fight against poverty; ensuring decent work and economic growth; achieving reduced inequalities; and on climate action.

In the year 2020 however, the Jamaican economy contracted by 11% percent relative to 2019 - the worst economic decline in Jamaica in the last 40 years. With the exception of government services, no industry was spared. Furthermore, earnings from tourism, our largest source of foreign exchange revenue, reduced by more than 70% with obvious knock on effects. At the same time expenditure for healthcare and emergency social and economic support, as we all know, have continued to rise.

Mr. President,

In order to put the world back on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030, the pandemic must first be controlled. Despite our best efforts, the greatest challenge to controlling the pandemic has been a lack of reliable, affordable and consistent access to vaccines.

We hope that recent announcements regarding more equitable redistribution of vaccines from more developed economies to developing economies will materialise quickly, to arrest the most immediate threat to development.

Mr. President,

More broadly, Jamaica has consistently called for three major courses of action that will significantly boost our efforts within the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

First, we must increase concessional financing initiatives of key international financial institutions, and adjust eligibility criteria to take account of developmental realities. Since the year 2000, there has been a marked shift in the worldwide allocation of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in favour of low-income and least developed countries (LDCs). This attention to their needs is welcomed. At the same time, Jamaica and most other SIDS in the Caribbean have been graduated from ODA and excluded from the concessional financing initiatives of key international financial institutions. Jamaica's classification as a middle income developing country (MIC) has posed a major hurdle for our sustainable growth and development, and has continuing ramifications for our resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Second, there is an urgent need to agree, *inter alia*, on a multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI) for the development financing of SIDS. Greater flexibility must be exercised by international development partners (IDPs) in accounting for the distinct vulnerabilities and structural gaps of developing countries, rather than relying excessively on GDP per capita income as the basis for development financing. The cyclic impact of climate-related disasters such as hurricanes, droughts and flooding, further reduce our public resources and fiscal space to achieve the SDGs. More attention absolutely must be paid to addressing the financial architecture to align with developmental constraints if we are to actualize developmental goals.

Third, we must build on last year's discussions at the High-Level Event on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond, which was co-chaired by the Prime Ministers of Canada and Jamaica and the UN Secretary General. Many options had been proposed in areas such as jobs and inclusive growth; recovering better for sustainability; global liquidity and financial stability; and debt vulnerability. We must maintain the momentum towards decisive global action to do different things if we are indeed to achieve a different result.

Mr. President,

In closing, I urge the international community to reaffirm its solidarity with SIDS, revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development, and re-commit to scaling up financial and technical assistance to build economic resilience.

May we never lose sight of the vision *that we must leave no one behind* as we seek out new and innovative pathways to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to get back on track to achieving the UN 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

Thank you, Mr President.