



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

STATEMENT BY

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

AT THE

**FORUM OF SMALL STATES (FOSS)
INFORMAL HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE
“SMALL STATES, MULTILATERALISM AND INTERNATIONAL LAW”**

NEW YORK

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Mr. Moderator, Ambassador Gafoor

H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Honourable Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore and Chair of the FOSS

Judge Abdul Koroma, Former Judge of the International Court of Justice,
Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am profoundly grateful to the Forum of Small States for the invitation to address this important and timely high-level forum, and am pleased to join you today.

The world is at a moment in time which requires that those of us who believe in the values of justice, the rule of law and the importance of multilateral diplomacy, continue to Act and speak concertedly and clearly in support of these fundamental principles. We must do so to protect those institutions which provide us with the best hope of realizing our collective human potential and reaffirm our commitment to the abiding promises and values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Minister Balakrishnan, in this context, Singapore's leadership of the FOSS has played a significant role in ensuring the Forum's longevity and success in meeting its mandate. As the FOSS celebrates 30 years, I take this opportunity to congratulate you and your team at capital and here in New York for the sterling service on behalf of the entire membership of the FOSS.

Excellencies,

Longstanding challenges, as well as those evolving as we speak, threaten to undermine and set back the achievement of our shared aspirations for development, prosperity and peace. I think of the pandemic, the crises unfolding in Europe, the climate crisis, and so many more. Multilateral cooperation will be key to getting us back on the road of sustainable economic growth and enhancing resilience to cope

with these global challenges. We must reaffirm our commitment to a world underpinned by a strong, rules-based multilateral system.

Even with all the examples of reasons for frustration and concern, we must recognize that the alternative is a more dangerous and divided world that will threaten to marginalize and erode the security and development of small states, in particular. The situation demands that we intensify and accelerate cooperation rather than turn inwards. While we may always have to contend with isolationist and protectionist sentiments, all states, especially small ones, must continue to push back against the dangers of that approach and emphasize the tremendous benefits to our nations and peoples of a robust and well-functioning multilateral system.

The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly demonstrated our interdependence - and the need for greater cooperation across borders. In this regard, big and small states alike have the same interest: to recover from this pandemic as quickly as possible. Multilateralism is not just an option: it is the only path that can deliver a sustainable and equitable recovery for all.

Since the founding of the United Nations in 1945, when many of the world's small states did not yet exist as independent countries, the world body's membership has nearly quadrupled. Less than 20 small states were present at the signing of the United Nations Charter. Today, with 108 members, we make up the majority of United Nations member states, and are among the strongest advocates for the rules-based multilateralism which underpins the UN's mission and work.

Indeed, multilateral organizations like the UN provide small states with the opportunity to play a significant role in global affairs in a democratic space. As small states, our inherent conditions and indeed the threats to our very existence must continue to motivate us to push for the changes needed for a safer world.

In 1998, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that the contributions of small states are “the very glue of progressive international cooperation for the common good.” Indeed, small states routinely drive substantive and structural discussions at the UN, as they strive to uphold and develop international principles.

Despite these nominal guarantees of equality, as small states, we often face challenges in advancing our interests that may not necessarily align with the interests of more powerful states on the global stage. This reality reinforces the need for us, where there is commonality of purpose, to use our collective voice in the multilateral space to amplify our message and capture the attention of our intended audience.

Excellencies,

The rules-based international system is our safeguard and international law stands as our first line of our defense against global challenges. Small-state coalitions, like the FOSS, help the UN and other bodies as a whole to operate toward consensus building with fundamental principles of international law as guardrails. Undeniably, small states have led in the development of international law and institutions, such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which was adopted in Montego Bay forty years ago. In so doing, when we move together in a united way, we do best. In every area, we maximize our impact by combining strengths, sharing burdens and amplifying our voice and influence.

In closing, Excellencies, as demonstrated by our achievements, small states can advocate for AND deliver change on issues that are of high importance to us. We must continue to make significant contributions to, and ardently promote, multilateral cooperation and international law. Our roles and voices in the international system provide the opportunity; and our survival and success as Small States depend on it.

Thank you.