



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

**REMARKS BY**  
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**NATIONS**  
**AT THE**  
**HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF) ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**  
**VIRTUAL SIDE EVENT HOSTED BY THE GOVERNMENTS OF AUSTRALIA,**  
**JAMAICA, PORTUGAL, SINGAPORE AND SAMOA**  
**“PROTECTING AND PROMOTING SDG 14 TO ADDRESS SIDS’ UNIQUE**  
**VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE”**

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***FINAL TEXT***

Thank you Moderator,

It is a pleasure to join this distinguished panel to discuss Goal 14 in connection with the vulnerabilities and resilience of Small Island Developing States.

SDG14 is under review at this year's HLPF and coming on the heels of the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC) in Lisbon, it is more than opportune to have this space to share views about Life Under Water and how implementing and achieving this goal supports or is hindered by the unique vulnerabilities that SIDS face.

Certainly, all the SDGs are integrally inter-related. And yet, as you will readily understand, SDG14 holds a special place for SIDS. The Ocean and seas not only contribute to our environmental sustainability and economic livelihoods but they are also a significant part of our identities. Our people have a long and unbreakable connection to the Ocean. It is as engrained as the air we breathe and the ground we walk upon. In my own country, Jamaica, we grow up with the phrase “sun, sand and sea” and we call ourselves “the land of wood and water”.

We recognise the vast potential that the Ocean holds for our economic development. In fact, Jamaica's maritime based economy is valued at more than US\$1 billion and more than 80% of our GDP is generated in coastal areas. Further, we cannot even place a price tag on the great variety of marine bio-diversity in our waters.

And so, this is the first point I would like to emphasise: while we often think about the traditional forms of vulnerability and resilience in terms of disasters and external shocks (and we shall soon come to those), our heavy dependence on the ocean amidst a global emergency is in itself an inherent vulnerability for SIDS. Marine pollution, overfishing, invasive species, acidification, warming waters and coastal erosion are serious threats to the health of the Ocean and therefore to our own survival. We face a special vulnerability that requires continuous action to save our ocean.

We therefore welcome the commitments made by so many states at the UNOC and are committed to collaborating with others to meet the Ocean related goals. We have seen in the past however, that commitments are easier announced than implemented. We call on states to lead from the front and exhort other stakeholders to play their part as well.

In measuring vulnerability, we must be cognisant of the concurrence of hazards that countries face, in particular SIDS. Tourism dependent economies will face a calamitous crisis in the aftermath of a tsunami as much as they also would be challenged by rising energy prices driving up the cost of travel. The climate-based disasters that devastate islands therefore deal a double blow to our socio-economic structures - the cost of damage and recovery and the losses that ripple through the system.

The science tells us that these disasters are worsened due to climate change accelerated by human activity. SIDS call for urgent action to reverse the damage to the Ocean in order to reduce the negative impacts of climate change. Addressing these specific vulnerabilities is a reality that SIDS face and which we often cannot manage to deal with on our own, nor should we.

This is why the development of a multidimensional vulnerability index for SIDS remains a priority. SIDS are committed to doing our part to build resilience, increase adaptation, and keep commitments towards halting climate change. In Jamaica, for example, we have taken up insurance under the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility, allowing for claims in the event of certain disasters. And since 2021 we developed the innovative Catastrophe Bond issued through the World Bank and facilitated with the support of the USAID and Global Risk Financing Facility (GRiF), the latter funded by Germany and the UK. Valued at \$185 million, the CatBond strengthens our disaster risk mitigation strategies and our economic resilience.

But the ability to finance these instruments has been dependent on access to additional fiscal support. To be able to scale them up and expand and replicate elsewhere would require greater access to capital, which is then limited due to eligibility considerations. An MVI would demonstrably change this scenario.

I am pleased that our partners in this event today recognise the importance of moving away from GDP as the sole measure of development status. Jamaica strongly supports the work to finalize an MVI for SIDS by 2022 and looks forward to the outcome of the work of the high level panel. Its development and use will go a long way to ensure that SIDS can strengthen resilience and recovery through access to financing and reduce unsustainable debt levels. It will also increase access to financing that will support efforts to meet SDG14 and in a mutually reinforcing cycle, SIDS making the leap to a sustainable blue economy puts us well on the way to greater and more inclusive development for our people.

Thank you.