



GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA

STATEMENT BY

**THE HONOURABLE EDMUND BARTLETT, CD
MINISTER OF TOURISM**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL THEMATIC EVENT ON TOURISM**

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK

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Mr. President

Excellencies,

At the outset, allow me to express Jamaica's appreciation for the support provided by Member States of the United Nations in the General Assembly last year for the adoption of the resolution establishing February 17 as Global Tourism Resilience Day. I also express my thanks to you, Mr. President, for convening today's series of meetings as we commemorate that important milestone. In our collective pursuit of global sustainability, it is imperative that we recognize the fragility of tourism-dependent economies and the transformative power of tourism resilience.

Historically, tourism sectors have been the first to be affected by global crises-be it health pandemics like COVID-19, economic downturns, or natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes. However, the sectors have also demonstrated a remarkable ability to bounce back, acting as catalysts for broader economic recovery. In the aftermath of such events, tourism has not only rebounded but has often been a cornerstone of rebuilding efforts, providing jobs, revitalizing local businesses, and restoring confidence and enhancing people -to people contact.

Mr. President,

The contribution of tourism to the recovery and sustainability of economies, especially in SIDS, is substantial. For instance, following the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, nations such as Thailand and the Maldives leveraged their tourism sectors to rebuild and renew affected areas, enhancing environmental and economic resilience. These efforts underscore tourism's potential to drive sustainable development by promoting cultural heritage, environmental conservation and social inclusion.

In Jamaica, our focus has shifted towards sustainable tourism that respects both our natural resources and cultural heritage, ensuring long-term economic viability and sustainability. Projects that incorporate local communities and businesses are prioritized, fostering a shared commitment to resilience.

However, the road to resilience is not one we can walk alone. Protecting global tourism, especially in SIDS, requires a concerted, international effort to implement adaptive, forward-thinking policies that not only mitigate risks but also promote sustainable practices. The vulnerabilities of SIDS to climate change, economic shocks, and other global changes demand special consideration and action.

Mr. President,

In this context, the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC) plays a pivotal role. Established in Jamaica, the Centre serves as a hub for thought leadership, project coordination, advocacy, research, training, and capacity building in tourism resilience. Our efforts are focused on monitoring and evaluating resilience strategies and forming policies that safeguard against future crises.

Through the GTRCMC, we have facilitated dialogues and partnerships that span continents and industries, creating a resilient network of stakeholders dedicated to the sustainability of global tourism. Our successes include launching training programs for disaster risk management in tourism, which have been instrumental in preparing destinations to handle and recover from crises effectively.

Yet, despite these advancements, significant challenges remain. One of the most pressing issues is the scarcity of resources dedicated to building tourism resilience in vulnerable states. Our efforts at the GTRCMC are hampered by limited financial and human capital, which are critical to extending our reach and enhancing our impact.

Therefore, today, I propose the creation of a Global Tourism Resilience Fund. This fund would be supported by international organizations and developed in partnership with global financial institutions. It aims to provide the necessary financial resources to support resilience projects across the world, with a focus on SIDS. The fund would ensure that these nations are not only prepared to manage and recover from future crises but are also equipped to harness tourism as a driver of sustainable development.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, as stewards of the world's cultural and natural heritage, it is our shared responsibility to fortify the tourism sector against the inevitable challenges of the future. We must foster a global environment where resilience in tourism is not just an aspiration but an achievement. The establishment of the Global Tourism Resilience Fund is a critical step towards this goal. It embodies our collective commitment to a sustainable, resilient and prosperous future for all nations reliant on tourism.

I urge this esteemed assembly to support this initiative, ensuring that tourism continues to be a source of hope and prosperity for vulnerable economies around the globe. Let us stand united in resilience, for the betterment of our world and all its people.

I thank you.