STATEMENT BY

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PRIME MINISTER OF JAMAICA

AT THE

HIGH LEVEL PANEL FOR A SUSTAINABLE OCEAN ECONOMY

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Mr. Chairman, I am quite honoured to be here, representing the interests of Jamaica, the Caribbean region and indeed all Small Island Developing States. A sustainable Ocean Economy is absolutely critical to achieving sustainable development and indeed prosperity.

As small island and coastal states, our inherent vulnerabilities associated with the size of our economies, geography, and exposure to natural hazards loom large and challenge us to action. Our people are however resilient and focused on the opportunities, not risks! We are focused on ACTION.

Our people, have a clear understanding of the value of a healthy Blue Economy. A high-level panel such as this, is critical because it outlines the way forward, it charts a course that our citizens, the most important stakeholders, can coalesce around.

Today, I have opted to highlight the points which will fit into a similar format for the output document expected in 2020; by sharing some information on Jamaica.

**The Jamaican Context**

As an archipelagic state, Jamaica has stewardship over marine space 24 times its land space, with an exclusive economic zone of
235,000 square kilometers. More than 100,000 Jamaicans depend directly on the ocean for livelihood and approximately 70% of our population live within 5km of the coast. Therefore, protecting and developing an ocean economy lies at the heart of Jamaica's economic growth and long-term sustainability. The necessary steps are therefore being taken to build capacity and to reduce our vulnerability.

In Jamaica, over the last few years, key policy and legislative framework documents were completed which enhance protection of our “blue assets”:

- The Government has declared approximately 2,000 km² or 15% of Jamaica's archipelagic marine resources legally protected. These include 14 Special Fishery Conservation Areas (SFCA) and 2 marine parks.

- We have launched a comprehensive programme of analysis of the systems which manage Jamaica's protected areas. This is with the view of establishing a mechanism for their comprehensive and integrated management, so as to accurately determine the economic value of marine and coastal ecosystems, to aid in decision making.
• The Government of Jamaica is actively pursuing legislation for a new Fisheries Act, which takes far reaching steps to promote sustainability of our fishery resources.

• Tourism is a major foreign exchange earner and source of employment for Jamaica and indeed the entire Caribbean. This industry is highly susceptible to Climate related vulnerabilities and other external shocks. Jamaica has established “The Tourism Resilience Center” not just for ourselves, but to assist countries in the region, to be more prepared so that we can recover quickly from external shocks.

• The Government of Jamaica has taken additional steps to protect its Coastline and territorial waters from degradation caused by Plastic Waste.

   A phased ban on Plastic Straws, Single use carrier/shopping plastic bags and expanded polystyrene containers was announced recently with some measures to take effect as early as January 1, 2019.

   Jamaica has further announced the launch of a Plastic Bottle Deposit Scheme which will target removal of 80% of plastic bottles from the waste stream for recycling.
However, despite our active environmental protection and monitoring; the pressures of population growth, economic development and the effects of climate are growing and impacting negatively on the country’s ecosystem, natural land and seascapes. Emphasis is therefore placed on “disaster-proof” development for resilience and sustainability.

Jamaica has taken its responsibility to the Global Community seriously. In addition to hosting the International Seabed Authority, we are a party to several Conventions related to the health of oceans, which include:

a) **The UN Law of the Sea Convention**

Jamaica is currently engaged in the negotiation of a global mechanism to address biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction.

b) **The Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region.** Jamaica has ratified two of the three Protocols under this Convention.

c) **The CARICOM Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM)** - which promotes and facilitates the responsible utilization of the region’s fisheries and other aquatic resources.
d) **The Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI)** – its objective being the protection and sustainable management of 20% of the Caribbean’s marine and coastal ecosystems by the year 2020.

e) As party to the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, Jamaica is committed to the achievement of the Convention’s 17 Biodiversity targets.

**Closing Remarks**

Jamaica is focused on inclusive prosperity that all people deserve. Our context demands that we protect our Blue Economy and indeed rapidly develop its potential. As we honour our individual responsibilities, the shared importance of a sustainable Blue Economy is critical for the results we want – sustainable growth and social inclusion. I call on all present here today, to use their collective weight to push the global community to provide the necessary assistance to the most vulnerable states, who also have the greatest potential for sustainable growth from the Blue Economy.

I endorse the direction of the road map that this High Level Panel seeks to develop - “The Ocean Economy, The Urgency of Today, The Possibility of tomorrow, & Charting the Course Ahead”.