

PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA

TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**OPENING REMARKS BY**

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**JAMAICA**

**AT THE**

**SIDE EVENT: “UNCLOS AS THE CORNERSTONE IN**

**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SDG 14”**

**UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE TO SUPPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 14: CONSERVE AND SUSTAINABLY USE THE OCEANS, SEAS AND MARINE RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**TUESDAY, 6th JUNE 2017**

**UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**

**Salutations**

On behalf of the government and people of Jamaica I am pleased to join you this afternoon, as we explore the critical role of UNCLOS in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Agenda, with its wide ranging mandate, provides a blue print for countries to anchor their national development effort, while conserving and protecting the limits of the planet. The Oceans Conference and this side-event, address matters of particular importance to Jamaica and other SIDS.

Sustainable Development Goal 14, which calls upon all peoples to “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development” expresses the aspiration and commitment of the international community in this regard. As stewards of this vast global commons, we have a responsibility to sustainably use and protect the marine resources for present and future generations.

In that connection, SDG 14 establishes a number of discrete SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) targets and indicators to which we will all be held accountable. This side-event highlights target 14.c: “**Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS”**

This target provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of the outcome document of the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development, *The Future We Want*.

In adopting that outcome, the international community stated its recognition of the integrated and essential role the oceans, seas and coastal areas plays in sustaining the Earth's ecosystem. It also underscored that international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (the 1982 Montego Bay Convention), provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and their resources.

An appreciation of the integrated nature of marine areas is critical to conservation and sustainable development, whether we speak of areas within national jurisdiction over which the State exercises sovereignty or sovereign rights, or areas beyond national jurisdiction, as highlighted in paragraph 158 of the Future We Want. The comprehensive approach adopted in the 1982 Montego Bay Convention is historic.

The mandate of the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III) was seen by all as extremely ambitious. Diplomats in New York were charged with formulating a new convention that would address the gaps in the 1958 Geneva Conventions and would gain the support of the international community, whose membership had been greatly expanded in the post-colonial era.

Developing countries were actively engaged in this historic process and the prominent roles played by their Ambassadors and delegates are well documented, in various international commentaries and law books. I refer, notably, to individuals such as:

Dr. Arvid Pardo, then Permanent Representative of Malta and "the Father of the Law of the Sea Conference", who urged delegates to consider the resources of the oceans beyond national jurisdiction as "the common heritage of mankind" and laid the foundation for the application of this principle to the resources of the area beyond national jurisdiction in the Convention;

Ambassador Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe of Sri Lanka, the first president of the Conferenceand his successor, Ambassador Tommy T. B. Hoh of Singapore.

It would be remiss of me not to mention our own, Dr. Kenneth Rattray,a former Solicitor General of Jamaica who served as the first Rapporteur-General of the preparatory commission for the International Seabed Authority and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea; andMr. Lennox Ballah who not only led the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago throughout the entire Conference but also served as the first President of the Council of the International Seabed Authority and a judge on the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

There are so many other notable personalities from SIDS, such as Ambassador Satya Nandan of Fiji, and from other developing countries, such as Ambassador Paul Bamela Engo of Cameroon. UNCLOS is also indebted to other invaluable facilitators from developed countries who exercised their diplomatic skills in forging consensus around critical issues.

I stress the involvement of developing countries, in particular, as a major defect of the 1958 Geneva Conventions was their inability to reflect adequately the views and interests of the developing world. This, and many of today's leading members of the Group of 77 were colonial territories in 1958, and therefore without a voice in international affairs.

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea has been hailed by many as the most significant international agreement since the Charter of the United Nations. It provides a regime for approximately seventy per cent of the earth's surface and, through compromise and consensus, and the ensuing years of state practice, has served to progressively develop the customary rules of the law of the sea.

The incorporation of binding dispute settlement provisions in the Convention provides a solid basis for the political and economic development of the international community through collective right rather than individual might. This is what, I believe, places the Convention in such a pivotal position as to be considered the cornerstone of implementing SDG14.

For a country, such as Jamaica, which as a result of the Convention broadened its jurisdiction with maritime space appropriately 22 times its land area. As host to the International Seabed Authority, we welcome the use of UNCLOS provisions on safeguarding the marine environment. Our marine ecosystems and biodiversity are especially susceptible to damage by natural and anthropogenic factors.

The protection and sustainable development of the marine environment is a goal and a duty of all Governments and peoples. The importance of cooperation between States, and with relevant regional and international agencies in achieving this objective is one of the hallmarks of the 1982 Montego Bay Convention.

We have come together from time to time under the auspices of the UN to promote common principles to inspire and guide the international community in the preservation and enhancement of the human environment. We do no less now.

I, therefore, look forward to our deliberations on the important role of UNCLOS in the successful implementation of SDG14.

Thank you.