



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

REMARKS BY

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**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
OPENING CEREMONY CONFERENCE 2022
OF THE
NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS**

**HILTON MIDTOWN GRAND BALLROOM
3rd APRIL 2022, 6:00 pm – 6:52 pm**

Madame Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ambassadors-in-waiting, NMUN Secretariat & Organizers, MUNers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to have been invited to attend and participate in the annual conference of the National Model United Nations. This is indeed an auspicious occasion which rightly enjoys an outstanding reputation, not least because of the dedication, energy and talent of its participants.

Seeing so many young people coming together in support of our Organization is truly heartening, for several reasons:

First, because the United Nations is your United Nations. It was created just over 75 years ago for the peoples of the world, whose future you represent.

Second, because it is deeply encouraging to see that so many of you, the leaders of tomorrow, are already taking an active interest in our work. By coming together and assuming the positions of different Member States, by walking in their shoes, so to speak, you will gain new insights and come to understand that diversity of views is not a bad thing. It is something to be celebrated and encouraged. This is how we learn and grow, how we become stronger, better, together.

As recent events have shown us, such an understanding is absolutely indispensable. The United Nations is currently going through one of those periods in its history where its role, value and relevance are under scrutiny. This, too, is not a bad thing. From such scrutiny, we can also grow as an Organization, stronger, better, together.

In these times of uncertainty, grief, and despair, it is critical that those of us who believe in the values of justice, human rights and the rule of law and international morality, continue to speak out. We need to defend 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.

Coming from a state that firmly believes in these tenets myself, I feel very much at home in this company of passionate students and defenders of multilateral cooperation.

So, I am profoundly grateful to National Model UN & WFUNA for the invitation to address this forum of future leaders as the United Nations celebrates its 75th anniversary.

The crises we are living through at the moment – COVID-19, the concomitant prospect of sustained economic slowdown and high unemployment, the climate emergency, entrenched and systemic racism, resurgent nationalism and irredentism, gender inequality and oppression – are all too complex and multifaceted for any one nation to tackle them on its own. They are best tackled together.

Multilateralism matters to all states, big or small. We need to see it as the lifeblood of international relations, as the UN's founders envisioned back in 1945 with their determination to “save the world from the scourge of war”.

Virtually all of human history prior to the end of World War II was defined by the power dynamics built around the notion that might made right – “Veni, vidi, vici”, “I came, I saw, I conquered”, was the boast, indeed, the meme, of the times. The rise of a nation, a group of nations or a people necessitated the fall of others. Competition inevitably led to collision and conflict.

Then our nations united in choosing a different path. We adopted a set of principles to prevent conflict and alleviate human suffering; to recognize and defend human rights; to create a framework to foster an ongoing dialogue to uphold and improve a system aimed at benefiting all people. In this light, the preambular words of the Charter are worth reiterating:

“To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, ... and

to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and

to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

AND FOR THESE ENDS

to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and

to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and

to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and

to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, ...”

In the years since, our planet has faced daunting challenges, from the divisions of the Cold War, the vestiges and legacies of colonialism, and the shameful lack of action in the face of some mass atrocities. And even today, as we sit here, conflicts, injustice, and suffering around the globe underscore how many of our aspirations remain unaddressed and unfulfilled.

But despite all of that, it is undeniable that no period in modern history has been more peaceful or prosperous than the one since the United Nations was created. We have, so far at least, avoided armed conflict between nuclear powers. We helped millions of people emerge from poverty. We continue to advance human rights across the globe.

This bold endeavor, whatever its imperfections, has been an unprecedented, if not total success. And it has endured because the overwhelming majority of people and nations continue to recognize that it embodies their interests, their values, their hopes and it has proven itself to be a viable mechanism for peaceful and sustainable development.

But in recent years, months and weeks, the system of institutions, regulations and norms built up over the past seventy-five years has been subject to sustained and seemingly deliberate attack. This is myopic and self-harming. A regression from a rules-based system into power-based strategies will not result in a safer, more predictable or prosperous environment for any country. And now, some would even question the value and relevance of multilateral cooperation.

Jamaica believes it is not only relevant, it is vital, more so than ever before.

Multilateralism is still our best tool for tackling big global challenges – like the COVID 19 pandemic that caused millions of deaths across the planet, with devastating impacts on economies, health, education and social progress, and which forced us to gather over screens for the last two years and re-learn how to interact as a society, virtually.

The climate crisis is another massive threat. For a SIDS like Jamaica, Climate Change is not an academic issue, it is a daily reality - an existential crisis. If we don't move swiftly to cut emissions, adapt our lifestyles, and build resilience, the results will be catastrophic.

We built the multilateral system in part to solve big, complex problems like these, where the fates of people around the world are tied together and where no single country – no matter how powerful – can address the challenges alone.

That's why Jamaica will continue work through multilateral institutions to stop COVID-19, and to better prepare for the next pandemic, tackle the climate crisis, fight the maladies of global society, and we will abide by and work tirelessly to strengthen the core principles of the international order as we do so.

So, the big question for us here today must be: how can multilateralism be defended and strengthened in light of today's challenges, and those to come in the years and decades ahead?

I think the overall aims and ideals embodied in the United Nations are familiar to many people: promoting universal values such as equality and tolerance; justice and progress; democracy and peace; harmony among peoples and nations, as I outlined earlier from the Charter.

Most people also know a fair amount about our very visible humanitarian work and peace operations: our blue-helmeted peacekeepers; our programmes of disaster relief, refugee protection and electoral monitoring; our immunization of children against deadly diseases, the work on prevention of genocide and the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, in which I had the honour to serve.

What may be less recognized is the need for, and the existence of, multilateral cooperation in all aspects of our lives on a daily basis.

Today, in the complex era of globalization, with all its opportunities and challenges, the number of areas where multilateral action is needed are growing exponentially. In the globalized world we live in today, problems can cross frontiers more freely than people. They don't need passports to travel.

To address them, we need solutions that cut across frontiers, too. We need nations big and small to work together. In other words, we need multilateral solutions.

Only by multilateral action can we ensure that open markets offer benefits and opportunities to all.

Only by multilateral action can we give people in the least developed countries the chance to escape the misery of abject poverty, disease and disinformation — by dismantling trade barriers, boosting technology transfer, promoting investment, and providing development assistance, debt relief and aid.

Only by multilateral action can we protect ourselves from acid rain, or global warming; from the spread of COVID-19 & communicable diseases,

the illicit trade in drugs and weapons, or the growing problem of the odious trafficking in persons.

An effective, rules-based multilateral system is the world's insurance policy against existential threats, and we now know the awful cost of failing to provide comprehensive cover. But beyond those gargantuan issues immeasurable in scale, multilateralism works for us in more down-to-earth matters too – in ways that make our lives easier without even noticing.

Every time you board an airplane, for example, you depend on the International Civil Aviation Organization for global standards for airplane and airport safety, aviation communications; and performance of pilots, flight crews, air traffic controllers and ground and maintenance crews.

And you depend on the World Meteorological Organization and its World Meteorological Vigil system, which enables planes to pick safe routes through stormy skies.

Every time you see a movie, listen to your favourite (Bob Marley) song, you are benefiting from the work of the World Intellectual Property Organization, which helps protect copyrights for films and music.

Every time you make a long-distance telephone call, you are relying on the International Telecommunication Union, which sets the rules and international arrangements that make it possible for countries to connect through global networks; and which manages the allocation of radio frequencies and satellite orbital positions.

Indeed, ever since countries started connecting with one another in an organized way, they recognized the need to use a multilateral approach to impose some order in their dealings with one another: for example, by creating the forerunner to the ITU - the International Telegraph Union - in 1856, and the Universal Postal Union, in 1874.

Plan to enjoy some seafood for dinner? The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea stipulates that coastal states (like us) have sovereign rights over natural resources and certain other economic activities in a 200

nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone, meaning that the waters of New York are protected from fishing armadas from other countries.

These are just some of the ways that multilateral cooperation works for all of us, every day of the year.

Now, the advantages for small countries to follow a genuine and consistent multilateral path are quite obvious. Their interests will be better protected if they form part of a large community with a common design and speak with a unified and therefore amplified voice.

For bigger countries, the reasons may seem less obvious at first glance. They may have the hegemonic power and the capability to go it alone. Indeed, sometimes it seems that imperial aspirations can be quite tempting, for some. But is it really in their interest in the long run? I would argue that it is not. By accepting the rules of multilateralism, they can ensure that other countries follow them as well.

It may not always be easy. As you yourselves will see in the coming simulations, where you will take on the roles of Member States, negotiations can be tedious, difficult and complex. It may be tempting, as a small country, to throw the towel in, or as a powerful country, to pressure others to get the results you want. But what is important is to be able to see the bigger picture, to realize that something emerging out of consensus or negotiations may in the end have the greater value for all countries, big and small.

When countries work together in multilateral institutions – developing, respecting, and, when necessary, enforcing international law – they develop mutual trust, and achieve more effective cooperation, to everyone's benefit.

The more a country makes use of multilateral institutions — thereby respecting shared values, and accepting the obligations and restraints inherent in those values — the more others will trust and respect that country, and the stronger its chance to exercise true leadership.

But for any one State — large or small — choosing to follow or reject the multilateral path must not be a simple question of political convenience. It should not be a matter of picking and choosing what suits them for the moment — a sort of “à la carte” approach. Such a transactional use of multilateral mechanisms and obligations can create a sense of unprincipled selectivity and double standards. It tends to discredit multilateralism and, above all, the international legitimacy that goes with it.

Among multilateral institutions, the United Nations has a special place. It is the only one that is truly universal.

The United Nation's 193 Member States do indeed include the largest and the smallest, from China, with a population of nearly one and a half billion, to Nauru with just over 10,000.

The United Nations is not a world government, and was never intended to be one. It is a consortium of sovereign nations, coming together in the recognition that they have common cause and shared interests and that it is only through concerted action among nations that the major challenges affecting the world can be tackled.

This was the case immediately after World War II, when the founders of the United Nations held firm to the conviction that coming together under a legally binding framework, with the goal of working together for peace and security, as well as improving living conditions of all peoples, was the only hope countries had of “saving future generations from the scourge of war”. This remains as true today as it was then. The United Nations is a tool; it exists to help nations navigate the ever-changing landscapes of international life and geo-politics, and to find solutions for old as well as new problems.

But even if the United Nations is made up of Member States, its work is really about people. And to carry out its mission well, the United Nations needs the support of people everywhere.

That is why conferences such as yours are so important. In Jamaica, we have a saying, “one one cocoa full basket.” To put it another way, “every

mickle mek a muckle". It means that the more we join hands to collectively work towards a common goal, the more likely we are to achieve success. The fact that at this conference, you are celebrating not only 95 years of engagement in your various iterations, including now as National Model United Nations, but also 95 years of school diplomacy simulations, shows that across the globe, and from all walks of life, multilateralism has been embraced by generation after generation of young people like you.

In that spirit, please accept my best wishes for a very stimulating few days, and my sincere thanks for your commitment to multilateralism. It is my fervent hope that many more will follow your example.

And so, I bid you good luck and farewell in the immortal and inspiring words of Bob Marley: One Love, One Heart, Let's [work] together, and we will be alright!