



REMARKS

**SENATOR THE HON. KAMINA JOHNSON SMITH,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS & FOREIGN TRADE OF JAMAICA**

**FOURTH MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE LIKE-MINDED GROUP OF
COUNTRIES SUPPORTERS OF MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES (MICS)**

THURSDAY, 26TH SEPTEMBER 2019, 1:15 - 2:30PM

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, New York

- Congratulations to the Philippines on your assumption of the Chair, and our thanks to Costa Rica for the work of your tenure. Acknowledge the Secretary-General's follow through on the promise of a single focal point for the MICs group to advance our concerns in the UN system.
- As a middle-income country, Jamaica continues to face significant development challenges. While not being unique to us, our limited capacity to pursue critical development programmes and policies under the parameters which presently exist in our economic condition, remains a grave concern.
- Our region's increased vulnerabilities to unforeseen circumstances, recalling the events of 2017 in the Dominica and Barbuda and in the last two weeks in the Bahamas, where category 5 hurricanes have caused insurmountable damages of billions of dollars, remind us that Jamaica is not immune from such reality. It is this reality that has often intensified our need to seek the support of the international community and which have led to an increased our debt. With a high debt burden, the problem faced is even further compounded.
- Jamaica is once again taking this opportunity to express its concerns regarding the policy of the international financial institutions on graduating middle income countries from development financing using GDP as the sole criterion. This designation prevents us from receiving certain types of official development assistance and concessionary financing needed to assist in our development objectives and recovery efforts. It does not recognize our vulnerabilities or high indebtedness and therefore constrains our economic growth potential.
- In spite of the challenges and constraints we face, the Government of Jamaica is making strides in reforming many areas of its macroeconomic policies which has contributed to a reduction in our debt to GDP ratio by 50%age points. While this has in fact improved our credit ratings and other economic indicators, we remain vulnerable even as we work to secure some of the gains made against poverty.
- As we reconvene to reexamine this issue within the context of UNDS reform, we are again advocating for an approach to development cooperation that acknowledges and seeks to address our needs and our specific circumstances.

- The UN, as the single most recognised global body which has undertaken reform of its own system, has an opportunity to respond to these expressed concerns. The UN as it moves to celebrate 75 years, must continue to convey hope for all, including countries like ours, which statistically are neither the absolute worst case scenario, but are far from out of the woods.
- If Middle Income Countries are to successfully attain our development objectives, reform must ensure inclusivity and sustainability. The UN should therefore ensure that the partnerships facilitate the pursuit of strategies tailored to our priority needs. Resources raised and designated have to be augmented and duly aligned with country priorities. In short, we must see states graduating upwards not only by measures of their GDP and GDP per capita indicators, but also in indicators of environmental protection, social services, educational opportunities, rapid pace of research, development and innovation.
- For MICs to ensure they achieve the SDGs, consideration of the alignment of UN and IDP resources with priorities of MICs, must continue to be a minimum benchmark. MICs operate in a global environment, within the context of external forces impacting our economies and vulnerability to unforeseen weather events, which in turn further deepens our fundamental vulnerabilities. A transformative UN Development System must therefore give due consideration to these factors, pool the requisite resources, and empower member states to move decisively forward.

Thank you.