**Remarks by Ambassador E. Courtenay Rattray**

**Investing for Reshaping Food Systems**

**New York**

**11th July 2018**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to join with Canada and the International Food Policy Research Institute to address the importance of investing in reshaping food systems.

Jamaica places great emphasis on agriculture development, food security and nutrition. In 2017, agriculture’s contribution to our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was 7.3 percent, compared to 6.6 percent in 2016. The improved performance of the sector is attributed to the intensification of farmer support programmes provided by the government and an increase in private investment. However, there remains a critical need for further development efforts that address the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition, build resilient and sustainable livelihoods and support sustainable food systems. This can be achieved through inclusive policy processes and the establishment of effective partnerships.

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) and a Net Food Importing Developing Country (NFIDC), Jamaica is unable to produce sufficient quantities of food to support the growing demands of its population. Various factors have and continue to impact our agriculture development, food security and nutrition. These include, but are not limited to:

* Increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events resulting from climate change, such as droughts, hurricanes and floods;
* Small size of landholdings;
* Limited availability and use of appropriate technology;
* Reduced availability of agricultural lands, due to urbanisation ; and
* High cost of capital

These factors are compounded by the fact that, as in many developing countries, agricultural activity is the main source of income for persons living in rural areas. For these reasons, we believe that hunger and poverty must be addressed simultaneously by raising productivity and incomes; securing smallholder’s tenure rights over productive resources, especially for women and youth; creating decent employment; ensuring adequate social protection; and enhancing the functioning of markets. Increasing interventions in rural areas is critical, as this is where the majority of the extreme poor and chronically food insecure live.

Jamaica’s high Food Import Bill leaves us particularly vulnerable to external economic shocks and climate change. We are mindful, therefore, of the need to enhance the resilience of our local food systems, so as to counter the effects of future shortages precipitated by external shocks.

For many SIDS, natural disasters severely disrupt trade and access to markets, with longer-term economic impacts and implications for achieving the SDGs. This requires an understanding of the dynamic interactions of disasters and climate change on commodity production, particularly in the agricultural sector;

New food consumption patterns have also meant a shift in consumer preferences towards nutritionally poor diets that have led to the increasing prevalence of obesity, and nutritional related chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as diabetes, hypertension, stroke, heart disease and some forms of cancers. These diseases are costly to individuals and to economies and are one of the main national public health problems that we face. It is not only paradoxical but unacceptable that whereas 2.1 billion people are overweight and obese, 842 million people[[1]](#footnote-1) are chronically undernourished. The global economic impact of obesity is estimated at $2 trillion a year.

This underscores the point that we grow enough food on the planet to feed everyone. While agriculture plays a direct role in eradicating hunger and extreme poverty, it is also central to achieving the Goals and targets relating to health, water, biodiversity, sustainable cities and many others. We need to better align national agriculture, nutrition, and NCD strategies and related policies to ensure policy coherence.

Jamaica is committed to ensuring that our citizens have access to a constant and nutritious supply of food. We will, therefore:

* Continue to encourage the production of local food through the “Eat What You Grow Campaign” and other such programmes;
* Promote investments in local agricultural production and agro-industries;
* Maximize the use of improved and scientifically validated technologies, to increase quantity, quality and value of small farmer production output; and
* Provide an enabling environment to ensure food security, sustainable use of agricultural land and fisheries resources and facilitate local investment within the sector.

We recognise that these actions will require increased investment, a well-functioning trade environment with respect to the world agricultural markets, and the proper functioning of domestic food commodity markets.

I look forward to listening to our exchanges this afternoon and to exploring how we can make smarter investments to reshape our food systems.

Thank you.

**PMUN/NY**

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1. FAO, IFAD and WFP. 2013. The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2013. The multiple dimensions of food security. Rome, FAO. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)