



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

**SPEECH BY**

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON**

**SPORT AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**AT THE**

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Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests and Honorees,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here this afternoon to participate in this Summit. Jamaica has a distinctive and powerful sport brand, which provides a unique opportunity for me to share some of the lessons learned and best practices we have employed in exploiting sport as a tool for social change, promoting education and powering development.

Holding the Summit now is also of particular significance as the UN community is engaged in the important discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. Perhaps from our discussions, we will come to realize that sport has a tremendous, though sometimes latent, potential to impact, support and advance human development.

While the importance of sports to the social fabric and national psyche of Jamaica cannot be underestimated and should rightfully be developed, for Jamaica, sports is also a natural and intrinsic asset; one that can be harnessed productively to create jobs, grow GDP and enhance Jamaica's business image internationally. In a number of ways, however, we seem to relegate sport to operating within the confines of the social and entertainment spheres. We have traditionally overlooked opportunities to enhance its value through maximizing both its direct and indirect economic impact, such as via increased job growth and the multiplier effect of greater consumer spending. What experience has shown is that, properly managed, sport can and should be a major contributor to national – and dare I say international – development.

I will make a few quick points.

Firstly, *about Sport as a Social Intervention tool*: we have found in Jamaica that sport has been an invaluable tool to tackle social problems such as crime and violence, political tribalism and community degradation. In Jamaica, sport, food and music are among the socio-cultural binding agents that bring us together. As such, we have been able to use sports to unite divisive factions of communities, to facilitate dispute resolution and to encourage behavior change. We strategically promote the values of teamwork, sportsmanship and honour within dysfunctional communities, in order to help overcome the challenges that lead to disunity, distrust and division.

Secondly, *Sport as a Health and Lifestyle driver*: Jamaica, like many other countries, faces an extreme challenge when it comes to non-communicable diseases, for which one of the major risk factors is unhealthy diet and lack of sufficient physical activity. By promoting sport we are able to counter one of these risk factors. In our school system, sport is a compulsory activity, at least in the early stages. Furthermore, sporting competition within our well developed inter-school's network pervades every sporting discipline in the country – from track and field to soccer, hockey to basketball, swimming to tennis. So many of our current stock of global 'superstars' were discovered and nurtured through our secondary school sports system. Even where this is not the case, our culture of sport has resulted in our competing in non-traditional fields such as bobsledding. In fact, we are proud that our two-man bobsled team has recently qualified for the Sochi Winter Olympics.

Finally, let me comment on *Sport as an Industry*: This is possibly the area of Jamaica's sport development which is least developed, but most valuable. For example, the international success of our locally trained track athletes represents a ripened "fruit" eager to be plucked. We should be seeking to strategically develop the sport industry – from tourism, to training, to media – for a number of reasons. The industry has the

potential to be a contributor to employment growth, providing non-traditional career paths for our youth. The sports industry requires coaches, managers, administrators, physios, agents, sports goods designers and manufacturers, public relations experts, nutritionists, oh and yes athletes. The global sports industry stimulates infrastructure development, construction and facilities maintenance; it requires a steady supply of food and nutrition services, it needs a constant supply of gear and equipment. All these are areas that can be further developed and that contribute directly to economic growth, state revenues, business development result in an improvement in the quality of life of countless citizens. In addition there are indirect benefits which include a lowering of healthcare costs and an overall increase in labour productivity. The result can not only be seen in a more healthy and resilient society, but also in more sustainable macro-economic conditions, as less public funds will be diverted to health care costs.

Even as the international community seeks to arrive at solutions to much of the world's problems – be they economic, social or political – we should look to see how sports can be better used to advance social cohesion and economic growth, while promoting a healthy environment. This is the very hallmark of development.

Last August, the General Assembly proclaimed April 6<sup>th</sup> as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace. UN Member States agreed to use sport and physical activity to promote and support peace and development. I feel inspired by the work being undertaken by many of you here today, and, coupled with the efforts of our governments, feel confident that we will make positive use of sport for the benefit of the world's citizens.

Allow me to close by saying a word of thanks to the Jack Brewer Foundation, which has kindly donated 10,000 soccer balls to Jamaica. Jack will be visiting Jamaica to undertake the handover next month and I wish to commend him for his generosity and commitment to sport in the cause of sustainable development.

Thank you.