



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

**REMARKS BY**

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**ON THE OCCASION OF  
THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE WORLD MUN DAY SUMMIT 2023  
CELEBRATING 80 YEARS OF MODEL UNITED NATIONS**



**Excellencies, Organizers of MUNers Across Borders, MUNers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is an honour to join you on the auspicious occasion of the celebration of 80 years of Model United Nations.

For eight decades, Model UN has been like a small pebble creating great waves of change that touch every corner of the globe, and its success is in large measure due to the dedication, energy and talent of its participants.

Seeing so many young people coming together in support of our Organization is truly heartening. The United Nations is your United Nations. It was created just over 75 years ago for the peoples of the world, and not only do you represent their future, you are also showing up in the present, in so many ways taking charge of that future!

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. Diversity brings innovation. Diversity forces us to think about each other more deeply; to find ways to understand each other better. It is therefore something to be celebrated and encouraged. This is how we learn and grow, how we become stronger, better, together.

The United Nations itself, and multilateralism in general, are currently going through one of those periods in history where their 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, 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, if not the only 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 MUNers Across Borders for the invitation to address this summit of future leaders, especially as the United Nations works towards its own Summit of the Future in 2024 for which we are contemplating the world we wish for future generations to inherit.

The crises we are living through and from which we are emerging – 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 succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

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. This bold endeavor, despite its imperfections, 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 existential crisis of climate change with which SIDS like Jamaica contend daily, as well as the COVID 19 pandemic that caused millions of deaths across the planet, with devastating impacts on economies, health, education and social progress.

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. For this reason, Jamaica will continue work through multilateral institutions to ~~counter the effects of~~ 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.

In so doing, we must determine how multilateralism can be defended and strengthened in light of today's challenges, and those to come in the years and decades ahead.

I think that a means of achieving this – and perhaps the ideal point of departure – is through ensuring that young people are equipped with the tools and skills they will need as future stewards of the earth by providing equal access to quality education.

In the pursuit of sustainable development, Jamaica recognizes the need for countries to create and foster an environment for world-class education and training. ~~which, We must also in part,~~ presents opportunities for youth to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes to effect positive change for the benefit of all our people.

Indeed, the implementation of Model UN Clubs in schools across the island, as well as the annual participation of our students in the Model UN Programme here in New York, plays a significant role in instilling universal values in the minds of Jamaica's future leaders – such as equality and tolerance; justice and progress; democracy and peace; and harmony among peoples and nations.

I am pleased to say that, in the coming days, I will be welcoming 104 students from ten schools at the secondary and tertiary level with whom I will be engaging on the work and priorities of Jamaica at the United Nations.

Model UN strengthens the foundation built by other local initiatives, such as the National Youth Parliament where the nation's brightest young people gather to deepen their understanding of parliamentary democracy and debate issues of concern in the House of Representatives, while developing skills in research, policy formulation and analysis, advocacy, public speaking and communication. Through these dialogues with government officials, Jamaica benefits greatly from youth inputs and consultations which inform policy and programme development.

Similarly, initiatives such as the Jamaica Youth Ambassadors Programme present opportunities for our young people – one of ~~whom~~which–you will hear from later today – to bring their advocacy efforts to the international stage through their representation of and in the Caribbean Community, the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations. Through these programmes~~There~~, the existence of and the need for multilateral cooperation in all aspects of our lives on a daily basis is reinforced.

Today, the complex era of globalization has shown some perplexities, even some schizophrenia: protectionism, ultra nationalism, outright racism and xenophobia, have once again reared their ugly heads, sometimes in the most unfortunate ways and in the most unexpected places. In the ~~era of the~~ 2020s, we hear so-called leaders harping back to the ~~tried and true~~ dog whistles of a bygone era to stoke their narrow,

selfish political fortunes, uncaring about the dark past from which those tropes and practices emerged and whence they should be firmly entrenched and buried.

Yet, with all its opportunities and challenges, the number of areas where multilateral action is needed is growing exponentially. In the globalized world we live in, problems migrate more easily than people. They don't need passports and visas to travel.

To address them, we need solutions that are equally attractive to the human spirit; the good parts of the human psyche, and which transcend national borders, too. We need all nations big and small, coastal and landlocked, islands and continents, rich and poor, 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 prevalence of infectious spread of COVID-19 & non-communicable diseases; the illicit trade in drugs and weapons, or the growing and odious problem of human trafficking.

Only by multilateral action will we ensure that emerging and evolving technologies - such as AI, cyberspace, and digital technologies - are accessible and well-regulated against human harm but used for human benefit.

I have said before, 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 that appear 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 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.

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



You will see for yourselves in the coming simulation, where you will be drafting a resolution, navigating and negotiating the interests of Member States 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. Otherwise, the result is very often a good one for only some, usually the more powerful, and very bad for the others, usually the most in need of a good outcome.

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 commemorative events such as this are so important. The fact that at this Summit, you are celebrating not only 80 years of Model United Nations, but also 80 years of 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 two 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!