

# UNGA79 National Statement

***Mr. President,***

I extend Jamaica's congratulations on your election to the leadership of this distinguished body. You can be assured of our full commitment to the successful execution of your mandate for the 79<sup>th</sup> Session. I also commend your predecessor, Ambassador Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago, a fellow CARICOM national, for his successful tenure.

We the Member States of the United Nations are all facing the same world of multiple and intersecting challenges. The great difference between us, however, is our capacity to meet, withstand and recover from the shocks they bring. If there is one realization we must share, it is that these challenges cannot be solved alone. They can only be addressed through multilateralism, diplomacy and international cooperation.

## **Jamaica's economic transition "the little country that can"**

***Mr. President,***

Jamaica is a small island located in the second most climate vulnerable region in the world. We emerged from a brutal history of slavery and colonization, achieving political independence a mere 62 years ago. Until recently, most of our independent history has been characterized by high levels of poverty, debt and unemployment, and a deteriorating crime situation. As we chart a course towards sustainable prosperity, however,

we are determined that these characteristics will not define the Jamaica we bequeath to future generations.

Jamaica has been focusing on building resilience. Our macro-economic fundamentals today are stronger than they have been at any time over the last 50 years. Our credit ratings have been upgraded by international rating agencies and our fiscal credibility has improved. Jamaica is now an attractive destination for investment.

Over the last 10 years, in spite of the pandemic, we have more than halved our debt to GDP ratio, significantly reduced our poverty rate, brought unemployment to historic lows and increased our minimum wage by more than 100%.

Our prudent management of the economy has created fiscal space that has allowed us to invest more into social welfare, national security, health and education.

Through our national broadband network project, we have increased internet penetration to 77% and internet user penetration to 85.1%. We are closing our domestic digital divide, providing more and better government services online.

We have also embarked on Jamaica's largest ever expansion and upgrade of infrastructure using a mix of pure budgetary financing and public-private partnerships.

## **Climate practical realities and climate justice**

***Mr. President,***

These advancements have been hard-won. Our effort has required social, political and international partnership, measured policy and prudent management.

Even as we acknowledge the sacrifices made to enable our achievements, we recognize that our many successes can be eroded by exogenous shocks including climate change, which we view as a clear and present threat to humanity.

As a Small Island Developing State, Jamaica is severely affected by higher temperatures, warmer seas, sea-level rise and the increased intensity and frequency of natural disasters. Hurricane Beryl, which impacted the Caribbean in July this year, was the earliest Category 5 hurricane on record. Beryl resulted in the dislocation of families and communities, along with significant damage to infrastructure, houses, schools and farms. Damage was most severe in our agricultural belt, wiping out crops, killing livestock and triggering knock-on effects of higher food prices and inflation. Our new climate-smart agricultural practices were no match for the hurricane, as her winds took the panels for solar powered irrigation pumps and flattened 70% of greenhouses.

We experience almost half of each year in the uncertainty of a hurricane season. Natural and climate-based disasters continue to set back our efforts to attain the SDGs and realize sustained, inclusive growth and development. We have therefore sought to strengthen our ability to

respond to, and recover from such disasters through a risk layered approach to disaster response financing.

Jamaica, therefore, has significantly increased resources to our Contingency Fund and the National Natural Disaster Reserve Fund. We have established the National Disaster Fund triggered by measured impact on GDP and became the first Small Island Developing State to independently sponsor a catastrophe bond. Additionally, we participate in the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility.

These mechanisms, however, do not reduce the occurrence of disasters, nor prevent the disruption, dislocation and destruction they cause.

***Mr. President,***

It bears repeating that no country can combat the effects of climate change on its own. Jamaica, therefore, affirms our unwavering commitment to international cooperation to counter the negative impacts of climate change and to the pursuit of climate justice. We urge the major polluting nations to honour their commitments under the Paris Agreement and to meet their finance obligations.

Furthermore, we welcome the adoption of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) at the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Small Island Developing States. More particularly, Jamaica endorses the calls for a redoubling of international cooperation and action to accelerate mitigation and adaptation. All countries must adopt or maintain the target of limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, through

enhanced NDCs, based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Allow me to pause here to congratulate the Government of Antigua and Barbuda for successfully hosting the Conference.

Jamaica calls on the UN and international financial institutions to adopt a new Climate Finance Goal at COP29. We further call for urgent and accelerated mobilization of international action and resources. This includes the full and effective operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund, to address issues of responsiveness and scale that are the most critical for SIDS.

***Mr. President,***

Jamaica welcomes the adoption of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index by the General Assembly last month. We call on our development partners including multilateral development banks and other international financial institutions to urgently examine the Index and commence its use. Rather than considering GNI alone, it accurately takes into account the structural and environmental vulnerabilities of SIDS. Its use by MDBs will better align access to, and terms of, financing with supporting these countries with their developmental needs.

Jamaica also commits to advancing dialogue and cooperation with stakeholders in the international capital markets to adapt their operations to the vulnerability- resilience profiles of SIDS.

Improved access to development financing is critical for SIDS, which are particularly off-track in attaining the SDGs.

### **Getting the SDGs back on track**

***Mr. President,***

The SDGs were adopted by leaders as a universal clarion call to tackle poverty, ensure peace, and promote prosperity. Jamaica shares the concern that, globally, only 17 per cent of the SDG targets are on track. We are proud that Jamaica's progress is further along and we fully support and are honoured to co-lead the Secretary-General's SDG Stimulus Leaders Group. International cooperation is urgently needed to drive sustained efforts to tackle structural and systemic issues that constrain access to development financing. Through our collective advocacy, we aim to elevate the global agenda to ensure no one is left behind.

We call upon wealthier countries and international financial institutions to partner with developing countries and redouble their efforts to create and implement innovative strategies to unlock financing and spur investments in attaining the SDGs.

The upcoming Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development presents an opportunity to commit to tangible deliverables to address the current financing challenges. These include impactful, practical and meaningful reform of the international financial architecture, to strengthen the voice and representation of developing countries in international decision making, and to substantially improve the quantity, accessibility and affordability of financing for development.

## **Summit of the Future**

***Mr. President,***

This brings me to the Summit of the Future.

The adoption of the Pact for the Future, the Declaration on Future Generations and Global Digital Compact signals renewed hope in multilateralism. The consensus demonstrated our collective resolve to deliver inclusive and durable solutions to current and emerging global challenges. With foresight, political will and joint action, we can deliver a better world for future generations.

Jamaica commends the work of Namibia and Germany in their facilitation of the Pact, and we were honoured to have co-facilitated, together with the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Declaration on Future Generations.

## **Cuba**

***Mr. President***

Jamaica believes in leveraging multilateralism to advance sustainable development, human rights and international peace and security to deliver results for all the peoples of the world. No country or region should be excluded from the opportunities to attain the SDGs. Jamaica therefore, again, joins the call for the discontinuation of the crippling economic, commercial and financial embargo against our closest Caribbean neighbour, Cuba. We further call for a cessation of the classification of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism. These measures continue to have a devastating impact on the economic and social well-being of the people of Cuba, and preclude progress towards their attainment of the SDGs.

## **Israel-Palestine Conflict**

Jamaica once again condemns the brutal October 7 attacks in Israel and the devastating counter-attacks in the Palestinian territories. The undeniable humanitarian crisis and instability compel all parties to resolve the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy. We commend the United States, Qatar, Jordan, Egypt and others who are making concerted efforts towards a peaceful resolution.

We continue to support United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and believe that a two-state solution, is the best way to achieve lasting peace, between Israel and Palestine. It is in this context that Jamaica has recognized the State of Palestine. We call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the release of hostages to bring an end to the protracted war and human suffering.

## **Haiti**

### ***Mr President,***

Much closer to home, Haiti continues to face one of the most challenging periods in its storied history. Rampant gangs are causing chronic instability and unspeakable violence. Millions of Haitians are facing hunger and dislocation, especially women and children. They need and deserve the unwavering support of the international community to restore peace, security and democracy and to address the devastating humanitarian crisis.

Jamaica will continue to play its part, including through CARICOM and the Eminent Person's Group, in supporting the political process in Haiti. Significant progress has already been made, particularly since the



Kingston Talks convened by CARICOM in Jamaica in March of this year. We welcome the installation of the Transitional Presidential Council, the appointment of an interim Prime Minister and Ministerial Cabinet and the finalization of the Provisional Electoral Council.

The Multinational Security Support Mission is critical to the restoration of peace and security in Haiti. We reiterate our gratitude to the government of Kenya for its leadership of and commitment to the MSS. We are pleased to confirm that on 12 September, Jamaica deployed its initial command contingent along with Belize, as part of the MSS. We are committed to scaling up to our committed numbers., but we also call on the international community to contribute more personnel and equipment.

Restoration of peace and security is critical to the creation of an environment in which free and fair elections can be held. The establishment of democratic governance is critical for sustainable economic growth and development.

***Mr President,***

Since the deployment of the MSS, we have seen improvements in the situation in Haiti and have cause for cautious optimism. More is needed, however, and time is not on Haiti's side. It is critical that we preserve and advance gains made. It is critical that we maintain hope and stability.

We therefore urge the Security Council to renew the mandate of the MSS, and to consider future transition to a Peace Keeping framework to guarantee funding. We also call for continued and increased support from member states, including financial contributions to the Trust Fund. This is needed for deployment of additional personnel to support the HNP as they recover communities from criminal gangs.

We further call on the international community to significantly increase contributions to the Humanitarian Response Plan for Haiti, which remains underfunded at 39% of the target. Support to BINUH must also be ramped up, so that displaced families can be fed and provided with critical health care, and children can return to the classrooms to resume their education.

Jamaica will continue to do what we are able. We will support our sister CARICOM nation in the effort to restore peace, security and stability in Haiti and by extension, the region.

### **Gangs, violence and drugs**

***Mr. President,***

Jamaica is seeking to comprehensively address the issue of gangs, crime and violence in our own society, fully recognizing the compounding impact of transnational crime, including illicit trafficking in drugs, arms and ammunition.

We have embarked upon a mission of transforming and strengthening our security forces and agencies, while preserving human rights, increasing operational efficiency, and delivering high-quality policing services to the public. We have made significant improvement to the working conditions of our police men and women and the National Police College of Jamaica has now received the highest international accreditation for curriculum and quality of training. We continue to expand CCTV networks in collaboration with our stakeholders, have increased mobility and introduced new equipment and technology, including forensics. We have also introduced new community policing models.

The Government is also undertaking social interventions in vulnerable communities. We have trained and certified approximately 40,000 at-risk youths and enrolled approximately 81,000 parents in parenting programmes. We are also working closely with the private sector and NGOs to expand social services in vulnerable communities.

On transnational organised crime, Jamaica has made substantial investments in advanced coastal radar systems and acquisition of offshore patrol vessels. We are also increasing the use of in securing our ports.

***Mr. President,***

As a result of these initiatives, major crimes have consistently declined to the lowest levels in 25 years. So far this year, there has been a 17 percent decline in homicides over last year. Jamaica is a safer place to live, work, raise families and do business.

We recognize that continued bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation, especially in the areas of training, intelligence sharing and joint operations, is vital if we are to comprehensively and sustainably continue to reduce crime and violence.

In this regard, while we appreciate steps taken, we reiterate our call for more concrete action from bilateral partners to stem the illicit flow of small arms and ammunition from their ports. We welcome the recent outcome of the RevCon 4 on small arms and light weapons. More particularly, we welcome the emphasis placed on technical assistance and capacity building, customs control, emerging technologies and through-life conventional ammunition management. These are all critically relevant

matters to ultimately turning around crime ridden inner city communities into peaceful and prosperous ones.

Cybercrime is a major threat to citizen security and an obstacle to sustained economic development. International cooperation is necessary to address the matter of cybercrime. Jamaica actively participated in the negotiations, together with our fellow CARICOM partners, on the United Nations Convention on Cybercrime. We therefore look forward to the adoption of the Convention and look forward to future engagements within the framework of this instrument.

***In closing, Mr. President,***

Jamaica has taken difficult decisions and has taken responsibility for our economic future. We have demonstrated that we are able to positively impact our own outcomes and redefine our future.

We continue to believe not only in our own resolve but also in the power of multilateralism and international cooperation to overcome shared global challenges. The people of the world are counting on these United Nations and the international community to deliver on climate, on human rights, on peace and security and on development. With that support, Jamaica is committed to doing our part to meet the challenges of today, while laying a solid foundation for present and future generations.

I thank you.