

**Senate Statement**  
**By Senator the Honourable Arnold J. Nicholson, QC,**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade**  
**on the**  
**Visit to Jamaica of the President of the United States of America,**  
**The Honourable Barack Obama and the CARICOM/USA Summit**  
**8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> April 2015**  
**and**  
**Jamaica's Participation in the Seventh Summit of the Americas,**  
**Panama, 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> April 2015**

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**Mr. President,**

The events of the last week or so have placed Jamaica's international relations and our foreign policy in the spotlight, nationally, regionally and globally.

I refer of course to the visit of Honourable Barack Obama, President of the USA, to Jamaica on 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> April 2015; the visit of CARICOM Heads of Government for the CARICOM-USA Summit on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2015; and the Summit of Americas in Panama on 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

Yesterday, we reported to the media on the outcomes of the bilateral visit of President Obama and of some aspects of the CARICOM-USA Summit.

It is true, Mr. President, that much has already been written and said about the visit of the President. But there are two aspects that I would wish to highlight which I believe may not have received the attention they deserve.

The first relates to Jamaica's position on the international stage.

When the administration led by Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller took office in January 2012, we realized that there was much work to be done to re-establish Jamaica's reputation in the international arena as a leader in the sphere of international relations and foreign policy.

As I assumed the role of Foreign Minister, I was conscious that as the thirteenth holder of this high office, I was following a distinguished line of Ministers who had served Jamaica and the region with excellence and who had, over the years, upheld the fundamental principles and values of Jamaican foreign policy and diplomacy.

I was also acutely conscious, however, of the fact that Jamaica had lost a degree of trust in our international relations and that our once stellar place as a leader in the field of international relations and foreign policy had suffered some damage as a result of certain events over the preceding years.

It was against this background, that in my maiden speech to the Diplomatic Corps on the occasion of Diplomatic Week 2012, I said:

*“We will not depart from the fundamental principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, self-determination, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and cooperation with all states in pursuit of an international system based on peace, justice, equity, and international cooperation for*

*development. We have and will continue to defend and promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law.*

*“We believe that trust is important in international relations. We will, therefore, be resolute in fulfilling our international obligations and expect that, in so doing, we will develop a partnership built on mutual understanding, mutual respect and an enhanced appreciation of the important balance that must be maintained between the competing demands of externally driven agendas and the rights of states to adopt sovereign positions on complex social, political and economic issues.*

*“As we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, let me be quick to assure you that the foreign policy of the Government of Jamaica will be bold and visionary, taking cognizance of the seismic shifts that have occurred, and continue to take place, on the global landscape. We fully intend to return Jamaica to its once premier position of a respected voice on the international stage.”*

**Mr. President,** if there is one thing that the events of the past week or so have unequivocally demonstrated, it is that:

**In just three short years,** we have once again taken our hard-won place as a respected voice on the international stage.

**In just three short years**, we have resumed our rightful place as a leader in international relations and foreign policy.

**In just three short years**, we have restored that most vital of commodities – trust.

The second point I wish to highlight, Mr. President, is the role played by our public sector in the organisation and execution of the visit.

It has been widely acknowledged, both by the USA and Jamaica, that the visit unfolded with a degree of precision and refinement that made us all proud.

Its positive impact was felt by the people of Jamaica across the length and breadth of our land and also in the Diaspora.

The fact that the time for preparation and execution was limited to just three weeks made the outcome all the more remarkable.

It is true that the work of the security forces has been singled out for special praise, and this is both appropriate and deserved.

However, I would like to draw the attention of this Honourable Senate to the fact that the organisation of the visit was a comprehensive team effort of several Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government, working in very close cooperation and collaboration with elements of the private sector and with the

staff of the Embassies of the USA and Panama in Kingston, as well as with teams from the White House, State Department and other US agencies.

I am sure you would wish me to publicly thank all the officials that had a role in the planning and execution of the visit, and particularly the members of the Inter-Governmental Planning Committee which was chaired jointly by OPM and MFAFT.

I think it is fitting that I name as many of the members of this team, including some from the private sector, that come to mind:

OPM	Jamaica Civil Aviation	Embassy of USA
MFAFT	Authority	Embassy of Panama
MNS	Jamaica Urban Transit	International Seabed Authority
JDF	Company (JUTC)	Courtleigh Hotel
JCF	PICA	Pegasus Hotel
JTB	Jamaica Customs	Spanish Court Hotel
MFP	NSWMA	JHTA
MOH	NWA	COPA
M. Tourism	JIS	Bob Marley Museum
MTW	TVJ	Stewarts Motors
MoE	CVM	ATL Automotive
MLGCD	RJR Communications Group	Milestone Environmental Ltd
MIIC	PBC of Jamaica	Breakthrough Communications
MYC	CPTC	The New Greenhouse
ODPEM	Ebony Park HEART Academy	MC Decor
UWI Mona Campus		
UWI Regional HQ		
NMIA /AAJ		

This, **Mr. President**, is a classic example of a successful whole-of-government approach, combining the skills and knowledge of MDAs, and working in close collaboration with the private sector and other institutions, to achieve a common objective.

I commend and thank the Inter-Governmental Planning Committee for their hard work and dedication and hope that their efforts will help us to remember the positive contribution of our public servants to national development.

### **VII Summit of the Americas**

I now turn attention to the VII Summit of the Americas held in Panama City, 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> April 2015.

It is widely held, and I share the view, that the VII Summit of the Americas in Panama will go down in history as one of the most historic meetings ever held in the Americas.

It marked the first time in the history of the hemisphere that all 35 countries of the Americas were at the same table for dialogue and exchange.

It marked the first time that Cuba had been invited to the hemispheric gathering.

It made Panama the site of the first substantive face to face meeting between a US and Cuban President since 1956.

I believe that it is extremely fortuitous that Panama had offered three years ago to serve as the host of the historic VII Summit, given its geographical location as the bridge between the Pacific and the Atlantic and as the Isthmus that links North and Central America with South America.

In his opening address, the President of Panama outlined a number of milestones in the history of Panama that placed the Isthmus in an ideal position to promote peace, unity and dialogue in the Americas.

Many delegations made reference to the Congress of Panama organised by Simon Bolivar in 1826 which proposed creating a league of American republics, with a common military, a mutual defence pact, and a supranational parliamentary assembly. Other delegations referred to the Jamaica Letter of Simon Bolivar in 1815, which called for the unity and integration of the Americas, and in which Bolivar dreamed that the Isthmus of Panama would serve as the venue for discussions by the Americas of issues of peace.

Mr. President,

As was the case at the two previous Summits, the issue of Cuba dominated the agenda of the Seventh Summit. On this occasion, Member States heartily welcomed Cuba's reincorporation into the hemispheric fold and expressed satisfaction at the presence of President Raul Castro at the Summit.

In her Statement to the Plenary, Prime Minister Simpson Miller noted that Cuba's presence was a victory for the people of the Americas, symbolising "a clear consensus that Cuba's integration into the hemispheric system is a vital step towards development and progress in the region"

The President of the United States underlined his commitment to strengthening US cooperation with countries in the hemisphere, based on mutual interest and mutual respect. He drew attention to discussions on the normalisation of relations with Cuba and advised that the US Congress has been requested to commence working on the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba. He underlined that he was looking towards the future and not dwelling on the past as ultimately, the US emphasis was to "improve the lives of the Cuban people and advance the interests of cooperation in the hemisphere".

President Raul Castro, in a moving Statement, recounted the historical context of Cuba's relations with the United States and lauded the efforts of President Obama, whom he described as an "honest man". He welcomed the US Administration's move towards the de-listing of Cuba as a terrorist state.

The subsequent 90-minute bilateral meeting between the two Presidents in the margins of the Summit was an act of reconciliation and a turning point in hemispheric relations.

**Mr. President,**

Several sub-themes of critical importance to regional and hemispheric development were considered under the main Summit theme - ***Prosperity with Equity: the Challenge of Cooperation in the Americas.***

These included health, education, energy, the environment, security, citizen participation, migration and democratic governance.

While there was no consensus document emanating from the encounter, there were a number of areas of agreement that had been signed off on during the preparatory process. These will be implemented in collaboration with the various inter-American institutions and multilateral financial institutions. Among the proposals, was the establishment of an Inter-American Education System to improve the quality of education in the hemisphere.

In her remarks on the Summit theme, Prime Minister Simpson Miller drew attention to the relatively high indices of poverty in the region and urged Heads to take action to promote shared prosperity with equity. The Prime Minister referred to the dangers of climate change and the need for legally binding commitments at the upcoming Paris Meeting. She also highlighted the plight of Middle Income Countries and the need for measures to address their situation.

Heads of State and Government also addressed the issue of US/Venezuela Relations in light of the US Executive Order on Venezuela. Prime Minister Simpson Miller called on colleague Heads to use the opportunity of the Summit to focus, 'not on what divides us, but rather on what unites us' and to seek to 'build bridges rather than to construct walls'. In this context, the Prime Minister urged the United States and Venezuela, two longstanding and valued friends of Jamaica, to seek to resolve their differences through constructive dialogue in the interest of peace and unity in the hemisphere.

The Prime Minister used the opportunity to thank the Government of Venezuela for its continued economic support to Jamaica through the PetroCaribe Agreement. She also conveyed appreciation to the Government of Panama for the arrangements made to transport CARICOM Heads and their delegations on a chartered COPA flight from Kingston to Panama, following the conclusion of the CARICOM/US Summit.

Mr. President,

The Summit Programme included a Youth Forum, a Business Summit, a University Presidents' Forum as well as a forum for Civil Society, all of which had representation from Jamaica.

It also provided an opportunity for Jamaica to hold a number of bilateral encounters with colleague Heads and Ministers. These included meetings with President Raul Castro of Cuba, President Juan Carlos Varela of Panama, Prime

Minister Stephen Harper of Canada, Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands, Honourable Robert Nicholson, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada and Ambassador Lacey Swing, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

**Mr. President,**

The VII Summit of the Americas showed that that our hemisphere has much of which we can and should be proud.

We are a zone of peace and stability in a world that is convulsed by conflict and extremism.

The last remaining conflict in Latin America and the Caribbean, unfolding in our sister nation of Colombia, is the subject of peace talks which are making good progress under the facilitation of Cuba.

In 2014 the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) declared our region a Zone of Peace.

The 1967 Tlatelolco Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean established the first nuclear weapon free zone in a densely populated area, marking an important contribution by our region to peace, and to regional and international security.

Nevertheless, we are not unmindful that there is much work to be done to place several of the countries of our region on firm social and economic footing.

There can be no let up on the push to have the governance framework in some of the countries of our region boast of the kind of fairness and equity that encourages and facilitates the upward mobility of those of our citizens who spring from less fortunate circumstances.

Poverty alleviation and eradication initiatives must constantly be strengthened.

The rapprochement between Cuba and the USA has removed one of the final vestiges of the Cold War and paved the way for the countries of our Hemisphere to focus on what unites us and to pool efforts to solve our common developmental challenges.

The recent announcement by the US of the removal of Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism represents another welcome step towards the gradual normalisation of relations between the two countries.

The recent CARICOM-US Summit in Kingston has infused new energy into relations between the two sides and provided a platform for enhanced progress and cooperation on competitiveness, energy and security.

Finally, Mr. President,

The VIII Summit of the Americas will be hosted by Peru in 2018.

Let us hope that, by then, the Americas will be even more united, more peaceful, more prosperous and more equitable.

I thank you.