

STATEMENT BY DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, DR. THE HON. KENNETH
BAUGH, DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 64th SESSION OF THE
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2009

Mr President,

I join others in congratulating you on your assumption of the Presidency of the 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. We are confident that your extensive diplomatic experience will guide your leadership of this Session. You can be assured of the support and cooperation of Jamaica during your tenure.

I extend Jamaica's appreciation to His Excellency Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann for his energetic and visible leadership of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly.

Global Economic Crisis

Mr. President,

We meet at a critical juncture, as the world confronts multiple crises - the global financial and economic crisis, food, energy and the climate crises, joined by the H1N1 pandemic. Both developed and developing countries are affected by these crises. It is the poorest and the most

vulnerable, however, who are disproportionately affected, and who are least capable of responding.

Even as major economies are reporting their emergence from the global recession, the outlook for most developing countries remains bleak. For many developing countries, there are no early signs of so-called "green shoots" of economic recovery.

For the majority of these countries, the impact of the recession will be deep, it will be prolonged and it will be painful. The irony is that developing countries are hapless victims of a crisis for which they are inculpable.

The synchronized nature of the downturn in the world economy means that its repercussion is evident in virtually every sphere – inflows of financing and investment have plunged precipitously; exports are weak; and commodity prices are low; Official Development Assistance has diminished drastically.

These consequences are reflected in Jamaica and throughout the CARICOM region. Countries like ours now face the daunting challenge of protecting the most vulnerable of their citizens in a responsible and sustainable manner in the context of declining export demand, contraction in services, including tourism, and lower remittances. Like most developing countries, the fiscal and financial stress has forced us to make significant adjustments to our expenditure programmes.

The distressing reality is that we in the developing world have limited scope and capacity to mitigate the impact of the crisis. We neither have the fiscal flexibility nor the policy space to afford ambitious stimulus packages to respond effectively to the upheavals in our economy.

A major corollary of the economic downturn is the problem of debt servicing and debt sustainability. Many developing countries could be on the verge of a debt crisis and require special support to help them attenuate the impact of the global crisis. Jamaica has always supported efforts to assist Highly Indebted Poor Countries who have benefited from debt relief initiatives.

Middle Income Countries

But, Mr. President, there is another group of developing countries who are equally burdened by high debt and are deserving of special consideration. I speak of the heavily-indebted lower middle income countries who are overlooked on the presumption that these countries, by virtue of their levels of GDP per capita, do not require international assistance. This approach continues to mask the reality of our vulnerability to external shocks, persistently high levels of poverty and dependence on commodity exports.

Jamaica is particularly concerned that the situation of highly indebted Middle Income Countries are not able to benefit from the kind of assistance available to LDCs and HIPC's, but which have been

devastated by the impact of the global economic and financial crisis. Jamaica is currently saddled with a debt to GDP ratio of 125 per cent. Along with our CARICOM partners we will continue to advocate for a special category of Small Vulnerable and Highly Indebted Middle Income Countries.

A review of the criteria for determining middle income status could help to address financial resource accessibility in the long term. We are lobbying for a review of the criteria.

Coordinated Policy Response

Mr. President, the pervasiveness of the crisis makes it imperative that coordinated international action is taken.

Over the last two days in Pittsburg, leaders of the G-20 met for the third time in less than a year to review the progress on commitments made at their last summit and chart a course to counter the impact of the adverse economic environment.

As much as we value the inclusion of advanced developing countries in the G20 process, we believe that it is critical that space is made to accommodate the voices of a wider cross-section of developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable ones. Our interest is in ensuring that the particular needs of small, vulnerable

economies and highly indebted middle-income developing countries of the CARICOM sub-region are addressed through appropriate representation at the Summits of the G20. We must have an integrated approach in order to craft the type of common strategy that a crisis of this magnitude dictates.

At the same time, the United Nations must play an essential role in helping to manage the various ramifications of the crises. It can ensure dialogue and enable a coordinated response based on an inclusive decision-making process. The UN Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, held in June, provided a useful platform. Developing countries that are not part of the G20 group were able to bring their concerns to the international community and to contribute to the search for solutions to the crisis.

We are encouraged by the candor of leaders from the major industrialized countries who expressed their commitment to effectively address the concerns of developing countries to cope with the crisis.

Reform of the International Financial Institutions

Mr. President, the severity and complexity of the crisis is underpinned by the interlinked and interdependent nature of the global financial

system. The experience of the current crisis supports the case for strengthening financial regulation and supervision to address systemic weaknesses in the global financial system.

The reform of the international financial architecture is long overdue. Urgent steps must be taken to reform the governance structure of the international financial institutions, including a review of the policy conditions attached to lending by the International Monetary Fund.

We are disappointed that there is as yet no visible action on reform of the international monetary and financial system.

International Trade

Mr. President, Jamaica is a trade dependent country. We, therefore, share the urgency of concluding the Doha round of negotiations in a bid to revive global trade and to aid in global economic recovery. Development must remain central to the agenda. Any outcome of our negotiations of the Doha Development Round must lead to clear benefits for our farmers, producers, exporters and consumers. We must redouble our efforts in this critical area and resolve to transform international trade into an engine of growth.

Progress has been made in the implementation of Aid for Trade for developing countries. We must build on this progress. There are outstanding commitments with respect to the provision of technical

and financial support to help strengthen the trading and production capacities of developing countries.

We look forward to further collaboration with our international partners and aid and development organizations in pushing the Aid-for-Trade Initiative to build on the supply-side capacity and infrastructure of developing countries, so that they can take advantage of trade opportunities and connections with the global economy, particularly against the backdrop of the global recession.

Climate Change

Mr. President, the threat posed by climate change must not be underestimated. Urgent and effective global action on climate change mitigation and adaptation is required to avoid the catastrophic consequences of global warming.

The Summit of Small Island Developing States as well as the Summit on Climate Change a few days ago reinforced this fact – the time for action is now. We were heartened at the broad agreement that significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is necessary to reduce global warming. What is now required is the necessary political will to take concrete, decisive action so that we will be able to frontally address this clear and present danger.

As a Small Island Developing State that is vulnerable to the impact of climate change, Jamaica has a vested interest in a successful

outcome at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December. An outcome that is based on equity and differentiated burden-sharing.

It is now clearly established that developed country emitters have a historic responsibility for global warming and should take the lead in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Other major emitters also have a role to play in climate change mitigation while taking account of their development needs.

To this end, we favour the conclusion of a post-Kyoto framework wherein the commitments agreed to by all the parties hold to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

A successful outcome must also include concrete commitments on adaptation, mitigation, capacity-building, technology transfers and the provision of financial resources to assist developing countries in addressing climate change.

We recognise that action at the international level must be complemented by urgent action at the national and regional levels. The necessary steps must be taken to integrate climate change into broader national sustainable development planning. Jamaica has embraced this approach.

Peace and Security

Mr. President, the pursuit of complete disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, particularly weapons of mass destruction, must remain a shared goal. The 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty provides an opportunity for renewed commitment to strengthen the non-proliferation regime.

Restoring peace and promoting regional stability through peacekeeping operations is at the heart of the contribution of the United Nations to international peace and security. However, as we have seen, peacekeeping interventions cannot by themselves produce the desirable outcome which is sustainable peace.

The Peacebuilding Commission, established in 2006, can assure this sustainability and make a difference in the lives of people in post conflict countries. We are therefore pleased that new arrangements have been put in place to make the Peacebuilding Fund more flexible as we seek to support the peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict.

In my own region, Jamaica remains committed to the long-term stability, socio-economic growth and development of our sister country Haiti. We recognize the important role of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti, MINUSTAH, in helping to foster the environment necessary to ensure a sustainable future for the Haitian people.

We must increase our efforts to counter transnational organized crime, narco trafficking and the illicit trade in small arms and ammunition,

which threaten the rule of law and democratic governance in many countries and fuel the spread of international terrorism.

At the regional level, through joint collaboration and approaches within CARICOM, we continue to tackle these security challenges which threaten the social and economic fabric of our societies.

Global Public Health

Mr. President,

The challenges presented by the outbreak of infectious diseases and potential pandemics, such as HIV/AIDS and the H1N1 flu, call for common global strategies to ensure that developed and developing countries alike can respond rapidly and effectively. As a result of the global economic crisis accessibility and affordability of essential medicines is expected to deteriorate in developing countries. In this regard, it is anticipated that developing countries will have access to the forthcoming H1N1 vaccine at an affordable price.

UN Reform

We end the first decade of the 21st century confronted by myriad challenges.

These challenges are not constrained by borders and cannot be confronted by states acting on their own. They can only be confronted through international cooperation and effective partnerships. But this

can only be achieved through greater multilateralism with equitable participation by all countries, both developed and developing.

Jamaica firmly believes that the United Nations is the only organization equipped to undertake this task of inclusive multilateralism. With all its imperfections, the UN still enjoys legitimacy in the eyes of most people in the world.

But the UN cannot successfully tackle this task in its current form and structure. It must be reformed to make it more responsive to all its members. Multilateralism cannot work effectively if the General Assembly, the most representative global body, is unable to assert itself as the central decision-making body of the Organization.

Nor can it work if the Security Council remains an exclusive club and is unrepresentative of the wider membership of the UN. The goal of the inter-governmental negotiations which commenced work earlier this year should be to come to a definitive conclusion on a comprehensive reform of the Council.

Conclusion

Mr. President, the theme you have chosen for this Session of the is both apt and timely.

It evokes the principles and objectives enshrined in the Charter. It calls us to reaffirm and renew our commitment to joint responsibility for development, the realization of peace and security, and harmony

among peoples. It is in this spirit that we look forward to the erection of the permanent memorial to honour the victims of the transatlantic slave trade. This will remain an enduring symbol of our collective resolve to eliminate discrimination, social inequity and prejudice.

The United Nations must assert its unique capability as the world's premier multinational organization to address the challenges and meet the needs of the poor and most vulnerable.

We need, therefore, to urgently correct and reverse the tendency towards inaction, inertia, and indifference to further address the development agenda.

This would be in keeping with the ideals of the Charter and our shared vision of fulfilment of the hopes, aspirations and expectations of all our citizens across the globe.

We dare not fail to live up to these expectations, as to do otherwise would seriously impair the very credibility and relevance of the United Nations, particularly during this time of crisis.

I thank you.