

**Statement by the Honourable Bruce Golding
Prime Minister of Jamaica to the 63rd Session
of the United Nations General Assembly, New York
Friday, 26th September 2008**

Mr. President, I offer you my congratulations on your Presidency. You assume this office at a time when the world faces challenges of crisis proportions. Much will be demanded of your leadership and you can be assured of Jamaica's full support and cooperation.

The Global Environment

We have convened amidst worrying global developments.

The hopes of the new millennium are in danger of fading as the ideals of international harmony and shared global prosperity remain illusive.

Globalization, despite increasing production and expanding trade, has been uneven in the spread of its benefits and, for many countries, marginal in its impact. Indeed, it has widened the gap between rich and poor within and among countries.

The global economy now appears to be headed for a severe downturn. Developments in the global financial system, the painful increase in oil and commodity prices and the escalating food crisis threaten to plunge vast sections of the world's population deeper into poverty. Fiscal challenges and the crippling burden of debt render many countries incapable of responding to this crisis. We are called upon to respond within our limited capacity to protect the most vulnerable.

In the long term, however, our hopes for survival will require huge investments, improved productivity, better access to the world's markets and human capacity building. Developing countries cannot be left to find their own solutions. The situation requires a collaborative, coordinated, global response. This is not mere altruism. It is an indisputable truth that if developed countries assist developing countries to improve their economies, their productive capacity and the purchasing power of their people, they will expand the markets for their own goods and services. It is the interdependency which we share and which is manifested in so many other areas, from climate change to global epidemics, organized crime and human trafficking.

Globalization and the Plight of Developing Countries

Solving the problem of developing countries requires more than mere liberalization of trade, privatization and the free flow of capital. It requires a sincere and sustained effort that focuses on the limitations that bedevil developing countries. Global development, not just global markets, must be at the centre of our priorities.

Poverty and wealth should not have to co-exist. Poverty can be eradicated. The tools of development exist and are capable of transforming the world, empowering the poor and enabling them to rise from their poverty. We must commit ourselves to creating a world in which not everyone may be rich, but no one has to be poor.

Millennium Development Goals

In 2001 we committed ourselves to achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. We are now at the halfway mark and we are behind schedule. It is time to take stock to see where we are falling behind, who is falling behind and what must be done to make up lost ground.

A critical success factor must be the partnership between developed and developing countries as defined in the 2002 Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, integrating aid, debt relief, market access, good governance and foreign direct investment. These initiatives were carefully calibrated. Proceeding with some elements without the others will not achieve the goals we have set. Indeed, it might make it worse.

We must all pull up our socks if we are to reverse the slippage we have suffered. Developing countries must ensure that their priorities are properly structured. Developed countries must live up to their commitment to devote 0.7% of their GDP to Official Development Assistance. This is a modest amount. Yet, only five (5) countries have to date done so.

The Peculiar Challenges for Middle-Income Developing Countries

The focus of development cooperation cannot be too narrowly defined. The varied economic and social profiles of developing countries require a more flexible response that recognizes investment in human capital, infrastructure and the transfer of technology as critical elements in reducing poverty in a sustained way.

This is particularly important to developing countries that are classified, based on per capita income, as middle-income countries. This classification deprives them of access to concessionary financing and creative measures to reduce the crippling debt burden that afflicts so many of them. If we are to reduce poverty, the peculiar circumstances of these countries cannot be ignored since that is where more than one third of the world's poor are to be found.

We call on the international community to devise strategic programmes to address the peculiar needs of middle-income countries with deep pockets of poverty. Because of these factors and our exposure to frequent natural disasters, Jamaica and its CARICOM partners are proposing the international recognition of CARICOM states as a special category of Small Vulnerable and Highly Indebted Middle-Income countries.

Global Economic Governance

The international financial system designed more than sixty (60) years ago in the context of those times has undergone very little change in its governance structure and practices.

The world has changed and this requires a re-engineering of the global financial system. Jamaica supports the call for reform of the existing financial infrastructure to reflect the new global realities and make it more pro-active and responsive to the needs of the entire world community. But it must involve more than merely expanding the membership of an exclusive club. It must be development-driven, recognizing that poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity elsewhere. It must include mechanisms to detect signs of global crises and must be able to institute preventive measures.

The crisis currently rocking the world's financial markets reflects the inadequacy of the regulatory structures that are essential to the effective functioning of any market. But it is more than that. It represents the failure on the part of the international financial system to facilitate the flow of resources into areas where they can produce real wealth – not paper wealth. The world is not short of capital. What it lacks are the mechanisms to ensure the efficient utilization of that capital.

Equitable International Trading System

Another urgent task is the creation of a viable and equitable international trading regime. Jamaica is deeply disappointed that the Doha Development Round has failed to deliver on the promise of an open, fair and predictable multilateral trading system. We urge all parties to resolve the outstanding differences particularly on the removal of trade-distorting agricultural subsidies, as well as the need for special safeguard mechanisms for economically-challenged countries.

Climate Change and Sustainable Development

The need for more concerted action on global warming is impatient of debate. Developing countries are the most vulnerable, but are least capable of mitigation measures. Countries that are the major pollutants must bear the major share of the responsibility for corrective action. They must make binding commitments to fulfill that responsibility. The purchase of carbon credits must not exculpate them from that responsibility.

Jamaica calls for a fair, equitable and balanced long-term scheme to bind emission caps within a new international framework beyond 2012 when the Kyoto Protocol expires.

The impact of climate change on agricultural output and the frequency and intensity of natural disasters to which countries like Jamaica are particularly vulnerable, point to the need for a global environment management structure that establishes clear standards and enforces compliance.

International Peace and Security

Jamaica is concerned that political instability in many parts of the world, often fueled by extremism and intolerance, continues to threaten regional and international peace and security. They are neither limited in scope nor confined to national borders. Resolving these conflicts

requires effective diplomacy and global cooperation and the United Nations must continue to use its good offices to secure just and peaceful settlements.

Illicit trade in small arms and ammunition

Our intense focus on combating terrorism, transnational organized crime, elimination of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction, must not marginalize the need for decisive action to curb the illicit trade in small arms which facilitate internal violence in many of our countries and result in high levels of homicides. Jamaica supports the establishment of an arms trade treaty to impose strict controls on the illegal trade in small arms and ammunition.

The Darfur Crisis

The persistent humanitarian crisis in Darfur must be a matter of serious concern to all of us. We are disappointed that the UN/Africa Union Hybrid Force is not yet fully operational. We urge all parties to desist from actions which could deepen the crisis, jeopardize the safety of the civilian population and UN personnel and prevent access to humanitarian relief.

Middle-East Settlement

Jamaica remains irrevocably committed to finding a just, lasting and peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict that must ensure the security of Israel and the establishment of a viable Palestinian State.

United Nation's Role

The UN must continue to play a pivotal role through its peacekeeping missions to create sustainable peace in post-conflict situations. Jamaica will use its membership of the Peace Building Commission to underscore the importance of sustained, long-term economic development in rebuilding and transforming countries that have been wracked by conflict.

International Support for Haiti

The devastation wrought on Haiti by recent hurricanes has aggravated the already harsh conditions under which the Haitian people are forced to live. Much more needs to be done not only in providing emergency relief, but in addressing the long-term social, economic and development needs of that country, as a sustainable solution to the fragile humanitarian situation that exists there. Haiti needs and deserves the support of the entire international community.

United Nations Reform

We gather here as members of that union we call the United Nations. What is the state of that union?

We must not ignore the cynicism that exists in some quarters about the continued value of the United Nations. Those cynics have not bothered to contemplate what the world would be like if the United Nations did not exist. We have contributed to that cynicism, so often bending the facts to suit our own design, breaking the rules to secure a particular advantage, making commitments without the will to honour those commitments.

The reform of the United Nations structure and procedures is an imperative whose time has long come. Let's not bury it in procrastination and incessant squabbling. It is time for constructive, consensus-building dialogue. The need for changes in the structure and scope of the Security Council has been under discussion for almost 15 years, bogged down in polarized, adversarial positions.

We have a compelling duty to put in place the systems that can secure peace and prosperity for the future. We therefore welcome the unanimous adoption of the General Assembly Resolution 62/557 which we hope will provide the resolve for the early commencement of inter-governmental negotiations within a specified timeframe and in the context of an informal plenary of the General Assembly.

Human Rights

This 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights serves to remind us of the central role of the United Nations in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms. These are essential components of the environment required for sustained development. It is consistent with this principle that we launched the initiative to erect a monument to honour the victims of slavery. I thank the Secretary-General and the members of the Committee for their support and assistance. I thank, also, Member States that have made or pledged contributions. We invite other States to do likewise.

Conclusion

Mr. President, six decades ago, the founding fathers of the United Nations agreed that it should be a mechanism for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of our common goals – peace and prosperity throughout the world, respect and tolerance among the powerful and support for the weak and vulnerable.

That remains our mandate, our unfinished business. Fulfilling that mandate and advancing that mission will require a more proactive United Nations, one that is more responsive to the needs of Member States and gives equal attention to issues of peace, security and development.

The hopes of people everywhere in the world depend on us, the leadership we provide and the will we exert for the times in which we live. We must not fail them.

Thank you, Mr. President.