



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

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**DURING THE
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING ON THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS**

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Mr. President,

Jamaica associates itself with the Statement delivered by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. President,

Let me commend you for organizing this special session in the wake of the unfolding global food crisis. This event is indeed timely as it follows closely on the heels of the just concluded 16th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16) where the global food crisis, like a dark cloud, ominously overshadowed the review of the various thematic clusters under consideration including agriculture and rural development. This session also provides us with a unique opportunity to assess the "state of play" in preparation for the forthcoming FAO High-level Conference on World Food Security to be held in Rome in June 2008.

Mr. President,

The global food crisis is occurring at a time when the international community is struggling to address spiraling energy prices, turbulence in global trade and financial markets and a looming global economic recession, all of which have arguably had a direct or indirect impact on the crisis. The international food situation which threatens reliable access to food and at affordable prices, will impact negatively on development and international food security.

The impact of the crisis on developing countries in the short term is already being felt as reports of protests and riots are on the rise. Millions of poor people across the globe are being plunged even further below the poverty line as they grapple with rising commodity prices and inelastic or declining incomes. The high cost of food imports has placed a heavy financial burden on food-deficit countries, as well as countries burdened by debt such as middle-income countries like Jamaica.

In the medium to long term, progress towards the achievement of MDG 1 (reduction of poverty and hunger) may be stymied. Given that the MDGs are intricately linked and mutually reinforcing, this is likely to have an adverse impact on the achievement of the other MDGs. It is therefore undeniable that the crisis which is multidimensional in nature has the potential to negatively impact economic growth, social progress and even political security.

As a small island developing state which is vulnerable to the vagaries of natural disasters in particular hurricanes, Jamaica has suffered major blows to its agricultural sector over the years. Last year, Hurricane Dean as well as heavy rains in the latter part of the year resulted in substantial damage to infrastructure and agricultural crops amounting to well over US\$50 million. The increase in the prices of fertilizer and animal feed has only served to exacerbate an already dismal state of affairs. As a consequence, the Government has embarked on a number of programmes or is in the process of implementing initiatives in an effort to alleviate the situation, including inter alia:

1. The elimination of or substantial reduction of duties on certain basic food imports;
2. More efficient production of food;
3. A national campaign to encourage backyard farming;
4. Resuscitation of the dairy and rice industries;
5. The use of improved research methods including in protected agriculture/research technology; and
6. Major expansion of the agricultural extension services.

At the regional level, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) recently convened a Special Summit which examined the impact of food prices on the living standards of Caribbean nationals. The Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) will be convening a *High-level Regional Meeting on Food Security in Latin America and the Caribbean* to be held in Caracas later this month. This meeting will inter alia, formulate responses to deal with the crisis and will serve as a regional coordination/preparatory meeting ahead of the FAO High-level meeting to be held in June. Jamaica's delegation will be headed by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

In charting a course for the way forward, my delegation wishes to underscore the following:

1. We need to "get back to basics". Investment in agriculture at the national, regional and international levels for the long-term is critical if we are really serious about addressing the crisis as well as to avoid a relapse. As far as possible, countries should strive to produce in order to, at the very minimum, satisfy domestic consumption;
2. The timely and successful conclusion of the Doha development round of negotiations while ensuring the fullest realisation of the development dimensions of the Doha Work programme, is vital. Unless the global trade regime is reformed in a manner that will afford developing countries the opportunity to compete on a more level playing field, the livelihood of poor farmers will continue to be jeopardized and rural development will be undermined. We believe that this holds the key to new and significant markets for agricultural and non-agricultural markets for low-income developing countries;
3. In the short-term, more support has to be provided for humanitarian agencies such as the World Food Programme as its efforts to feed 73 million people in 80 countries are constrained by its current resource base;

We also commend the Secretary-General for establishing the Task-force on the Global food crisis and look forward to their recommendations on the longer-term food security issues of agricultural productivity, land utilization and financing mechanisms. These recommendations should be presented for further review and

analysis by the General Assembly. The international community should use various fora such as this session in an effort to direct global attention to the issue and to mobilize the requisite resources for a comprehensive and lasting solution. A "quick-fix" will not suffice. I thank you Mr. President.