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16th Conference of Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change
Statement to the High-level Segment by
The Honourable Kenneth Baugh
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica
Cancun, Mexico, 8th – 10th December 2010

1. Let me first express sincere appreciation to Mexico for the warm hospitality and the arrangements for this conference in this beautiful tropical paradise of Cancun. As a neighbour and friend in the Caribbean, Jamaica commends Mexico's leadership throughout the process. I commend you, in particular, Madam President, for your tireless work in striving for inclusiveness, transparency and balance.

2. Madame President, Jamaica came to this conference in anticipation of a robust, balanced and decisive outcome to address the dangerous phenomenon of climate change. Our anxiety for such an outcome is not misplaced. As a small island developing states, Jamaica is amongst the most vulnerable to the impacts and consequences of climate change. We therefore have a vested interest in a successful conclusion of this conference.

3. A recent study prepared in association with the Caribbean Community notes that "Caribbean coastal communities will be severely threatened by the direct and indirect impacts of climate change which are projected to accelerate in the coming decades and compound the existing threats to natural systems and the society."

4. Madame President, our vulnerability to the vagaries of climate change is reflected in the extreme weather events which have become more frequent. After an unusually prolonged period of drought, extensive flooding associated with Tropical Storm Nicole last September resulted in damages of $11 billion. The impact on our road infrastructure and on agriculture was particularly devastating.

5. This demonstrates and reinforces the fact that climate change is not merely an environmental problem. It is a development issue that poses a fundamental challenge to the prospects of developing countries to realize sustainable development and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

6. The earnest calls by developing countries, in particular, small island developing countries and Least Developed Countries, for action to meaningfully and purposefully address climate change must therefore be seen in the context of the economic, social, trade and security challenges for developing countries.

7. Responding to the growing magnitude of climate change means that decisive actions must be taken. What is required is an ambitious post-2012 climate change framework that results in meaningful reductions in emissions in line with the scientific reality. The recent report of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) highlights the gaps which exist in pledges in greenhouse gas emissions. To guarantee effectiveness but also to ensure that stabilization targets are reached efficiently, it is important that all major emitters participate in reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. A second commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol is therefore imperative.

8. Small island Developing States will continue to defend the long-term stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations which will ensure that global average surface temperature increases will be limited to below 1.5ºcelsius of pre-industrial levels. Science tells us that a 2ºC threshold could be catastrophic for countries for our region and SIDS in general and we appeal to all partners to coalesce around a temperature threshold which would preserve the viability of the most vulnerable countries.

9. Jamaica is convinced that sufficient progress has been made here in Cancun to have a consensual outcome on the building blocks of climate change response in the areas of adaptation, capacity building, technology transfer, and financing.

10. We are nonetheless convinced that a legally binding agreement must remain our ultimate goal. It is in this regard that Jamaica reiterates its support for the proposal by the Alliance of Small Island States for the consideration of the pathway to a legally binding agreement.

11. Madam President, reducing emissions of greenhouse gases is of the utmost importance. Equally important are efforts to respond to the vulnerability of developing countries, particularly SIDS and LDCs, to the impact of climate change. The urgency for adaptation is highlighted in successive reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Political attention must therefore continue to be focused on adaptation measures in order to assist these countries to adequately respond to reduce the risk of natural disasters and build resilience to the impact of climate change.

12. Inevitably, Mr. President, adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change requires international support to developing countries in the areas of technology transfer, capacity building and funding. The transfer of technology, including green technology, is critical to tackling the causes and effects of climate change. This is of particular relevance to Jamaica which has a high dependence on imported fossil fuel and is characterized as one of most carbon intensive economies in the region. We are currently exploring the potential for wind and solar energy as well as a switch to liquid natural gas.

13. Madame President, equity demands that those countries which bear primary responsibility for the greenhouse gases that are causing global warming help to subsidize the consequent adaptation costs in developing countries. Current funding is not enough to finance the cost of adaptation. The pledge made in Copenhagen to provide $30 billion over the 2010-2012 period and $100 billion per year by 2020 was an important step. We note and express appreciation to those developed countries that have made contributions to the fast start fund, however, much more needs to be done. Commitments need to be honoured. New finance is essential to avoid diversion of funds from existing development needs. Financial resources must also be predictable and stable.

14. Madame President, unless drastic action is taken now the consequences of climate change will be irreversible. The proverbial window of opportunity is closing. The credibility of this process is at stake if, after so many years of deliberation, we fail to deliver a tangible and balanced outcome at this conference. Even more critical, the survival of many developing countries may be in jeopardy. Let us make Cancun the pivotal moment in which we collectively demonstrate to the world our firm commitment to a greener and healthier environment for future generations.