

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE, DR. MORAIS GUY,
MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO (HOUSING), JAMAICA
TO UN-HABITAT PREPARATORY COMMITTEE MEETING II,
NAIROBI KENYA, APRIL 13 – 16, 2015

Madam. Chairman,

Jamaica supports the Statement laid at the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat 111) on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Jamaica also supports the presentation by GRULAC.

Jamaica, however, wishes to reiterate that if Habitat III, the first major UN Conference to be held after the definition of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, is to be truly meaningful, the issue of climate change must be at the forefront of the policies adopted, particularly as they relate to Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

It is long recognized that Jamaica, which forms part of the Caribbean island chain, is frequently subjected to extreme climatic events and natural phenomena that occur in cycles. These events and phenomena

include earthquakes, tropical storms, hurricanes, floods, landslides, droughts and volcanic eruptions.

By virtue of the size of the Caribbean islands and the predominantly coastal location of the population and cities, the entire region is extremely vulnerable to both natural and technological disasters. For Jamaica, as a Small Island Developing State, climate change is of critical importance, as its impacts could have potentially devastating effects on our very existence. For example, it has become noticeable in two of our coastal towns of Negril and Little Ochi that as sea level rises there is increased coastal erosion rates, with some beaches being almost totally obliterated. Changes in weather patterns have also been negatively affecting our water supplies and agriculture, power and transportation systems, the natural environment, and even our own health and safety (<http://unfccc.int/ttclear/pdf/TNA/Jamaica/870.pdf>).

The situation is further complicated by the demographic changes that have occurred in the region overtime, with Jamaica, for example, experiencing an increase in its current population to approximately 2.7 million people (2011, Population Census), with almost 52% of the population now living in urban areas. Moreover, urbanization patterns, especially among the poorest sectors (occupation of high-risk land, use of unsound materials), further heighten urban vulnerability.

The negative microeconomic and macroeconomic impact of these hazards, coupled with the socio-economic changes, when compared to the physical and economic sizes of the country, have left many local, regional and national governments in dire circumstances. “An Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Report on Jamaica's Catastrophe Risk Profile has revealed that the country is at risk of average annual losses of US \$105 million due to hurricanes” – **PIOJ/IADB, 2010.**

This is no small change for a Small Island Developing State that is already experiencing severe resource constraints. This is a serious matter.

Mr. Chairman, I call upon this forum to further acknowledge that climate change is inextricably linked to the emission of greenhouse gases, fuelled by our appetites for the utilization of fossil fuels. I also call upon every country present to be our brother's keepers. This means ensuring that the emissions of both developed and developing countries are targeted, monitored and reduced; that appropriate green technologies are adopted and that support is provided for alternative sources of fuel to be pursued, while assisting SIDs in becoming more resilient.

We plan for the new Habitat agenda with all its attendant changes and inputs but we run the risk of planning for a world where there are no humans to settle. Mr. Chairman, our very humanity is threatened by the

effects of climate change. Developed countries can plan mitigation measures but for the SIDS , when our peoples lives and livelihoods are destroyed by rising sea levels, when our economies are destroyed by severe climatic events, when our crops fail leading to starvation of our peoples, then will you tell us what to do?

Finally Mr. Chairman, I wish to use this forum to commend the efforts of UN-Habitat, as well as, the multi-laterals and bi-lateral organizations that have put their monies and effort in building technical capacities in ensuring that sustainable practices are adopted in urban design across African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. I however ask, now more than ever, that a concerted effort be made to impress upon global financial institutions the need to make concessionary facilities accessible for human settlements developments in lesser developed and developing countries as well.

It is my fervent belief that by so doing, we will be better able to enhance the viability and sustainability of our towns and cities, and make them truly resilient, as our regions become increasingly urbanized.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.