




STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DARYL VAZ, MP
MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO WITH RESPONSIBILITY
FOR LAND, THE ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND INVESTMENT IN THE
MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

TO THE
HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 25TH CONFERENCE OF PARTIES (COP 25)
TO THE
UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (UNFCCC)



I am pleased to present Jamaica's views to the High-Level Segment of the 25th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Let me begin by thanking the Government of Spain for their herculean efforts in hosting COP 25. I wish to also thank the COP Bureau, the Executive Secretary and her Secretariat team, for their quick action and support for the staging of this COP in Madrid. We would like to also recognize with equal importance, the Republic of Chile as the President of COP 25 here in Madrid under the leadership of Mrs. Carolina Schmidt. It is indeed under her mandate that we hope to see a real increase in ambition from developed countries, with a more balanced attention on mitigation and adaptation; as well as an effective and timely implementation of the iconic Paris Agreement.

Madame President,

This year has been one of particular importance as it relates to the global response and action towards climate change. In the international arena, the Climate Action Summit and the Climate Youth Summit convened by the UN Secretary General, served as an important forum to focus the attention of world leaders, government officials, private sector and civil society on the urgency to address what we know now to be a “Climate Emergency”.

In early September, I accompanied the Prime Minister of Jamaica, The Most Honourable Andrew Holness, ON, MP, to New York in response to the urgent call of the United Nations Secretary General to co-lead a process of political advocacy and to garner the support of the global community for the urgent mobilization of Climate Finance in response to the goals of the Paris Agreement. Under this leadership role, Jamaica actively contributed to the discussions on Climate Finance with a view to bring much needed attention to the finance gap in adaptation for vulnerable countries: as well as access and availability.

The UN Climate Action Summit, in large part delivered several pledges and actions that, when combined and only if effectively implemented, can support countries in their efforts to speed up their transition to low carbon.

Madame President,

Please allow me to strongly emphasize that without accessing the appropriate and sufficient financing that developed countries have committed to make available to vulnerable countries, especially Small Island Developing States, our national efforts for climate resiliency and low carbon development will simply not be achieved.

As Minister with responsibility for Climate Change in Jamaica, I would like to reiterate the message from Prime Minister Holness taken from his National Statement at the UN Climate Action Summit, which I believe needs to be

recalled here again and I quote: *“The global financial system requires an immediate transformation. It must be science-based, technically appropriate, transparent and supported by accurate and inclusive tracking methodologies”*.

The financial sector must recognize that investing in mitigation and most importantly - adaptation, is imperative from the perspective of risk management, but it is also perhaps the biggest investment opportunity of this generation.

Jamaica advocated for the replenishment of the Green Climate Fund and continues to call on more countries to mobilize their contributions and fulfil their commitments to the fund.

Madame President,

“Leave No One Behind” has been expressed repeatedly from the opening day of COP 25. However, it only requires **one hurricane** to wipe out not just critical infrastructure and livelihoods, but often this can lead to many years of austerity and sacrifice in order to recover. Such extreme weather events therefore have the potential to seriously set back the scarce development gains made by countries like Jamaica, making us not only physically vulnerable, but also fiscally vulnerable.

Madame President, Excellencies,

If action is not taken quickly, adapting to the effects of climate change will become more and more expensive for **everyone**.

This is one of the reasons why Jamaica is aggressively pursuing a holistic National Disaster Risk Financing Strategy and has also initiated collaboration with key international private sector players to analyze physical climate risk in critical infrastructure. Similarly, we will continue the

engagement with the *Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action* to ensure that our Ministry of Finance is able to take action at the local level and bring domestic financial institutions and private sector investors into the discussion for climate action.

Madame President,

We were not directly affected by a hurricane during 2019 and for this the country is most grateful. However, we are still recovering from the effects of extreme drought conditions. In 2019, our entire island was challenged with managing scarce water resources. In response, the Government implemented a *Drought Mitigation Plan* that significantly alleviated this stressful situation. This action has made us reflect even more on the importance of mainstreaming climate change into critical sectors of our economy in order to effectively respond to these occurring extreme weather events.

Similarly, the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service has made a transfer to the *National Disaster Contingency Fund* of an estimated amount of USD \$14,230,782 million for emergency and disaster recovery. This is an important effort from the Government to maintain fiscal discipline, while ensuring fast response and recovery to our country and our people in the event of an extreme weather event.

Madame President, Excellencies, delegates, observers,

I provide this information to show that as a small island developing state, we are putting measures in place to reduce the impact of climate change, both physically and fiscally, and we welcome the collaboration and co-operation from the international community to support these efforts.

In addition, I wish to highlight initiatives that Jamaica has embarked on, in order to increase climate action and most importantly raise ambition:

- The development of a *Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action* for the water sector, aimed at identifying potential ways for improving efficiencies in the system while reducing the sector's dependence on fossil fuel-based energy generation;
- The recent commissioning of the largest *solar photovoltaic farm* in the English-speaking Caribbean, which will generate 51MW (Megawatt) and will provide the cheapest electricity on the island at USD \$0.085/kWh (Kilowatt hour);
- The installation of a *facility for storing energy* generated by solar and wind also the first of its kind in Jamaica and the English-speaking Caribbean;
- The launch of a *National Tree Planting Programme* targeting the planting of three million trees over the next three years, representing each of our 3 million citizens;

- The systematic *evaluation of sector vulnerability* to climate change island wide, with the aim of developing initiatives to increase resilience;
- Further research and development, as our own expert contribution in response to the *1.5° C target* to provide analysis and guiding policy directions regionally and globally;
- The development of a revised and updated *National Climate Change Policy Framework* that will improve our efforts to implement the Convention and the Paris Agreement.
- The strengthening of Jamaica's *readiness for climate finance* through initiatives that identify strategic areas for further climate action;
- The development of a *domestic transparency framework* and system to strengthen our capacity to meet the transparency requirements under Article 13 of the Paris Agreement.

Madame President,

These initiatives are **only a few** of the overall national efforts and contributions of Jamaica to scale climate action. For us, climate change is not an academic issue, it is a reality and climate action must be urgently scaled up by **everyone**.

This is also why we have begun the process towards updating and producing a **more ambitious NDC to be completed in early 2020**.

We hope that by leading by example, we will inspire and encourage other countries to enhance their ambition. ***Our only ambition is to raise ambition.***

In closing, I wish to stress the importance of three reports that were recently produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and that are of significant importance for all countries but even more so for small island developing states. The first is the Special Report on the impact of

global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, the second is the report on Oceans and the Cryosphere in a Changing Climate and the third is on Climate Change and Land.

These reports present the scientific evidence-based findings that we can expect in a warmer world.

We are not here to discuss science. We are here because we refuse to miss the opportunity as Party to the Convention to leave a legacy that is only words and not enough action and time is running out for us to do that.

Jamaica therefore anticipates the collective, meaningful, pragmatic, ambitious and sustained action from Parties at this COP25 and not later.

Finally, let me once again extend our sincerest gratitude on behalf of the Jamaican Delegation to COP 25, the Government and people of Jamaica to the Government and People of Spain for welcoming and hosting us in Madrid

and wish for the Government and people of Chile, a successful outcome for

COP25. The time to act is Now!

December 2019