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## Introduction

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Government and people of Canada, for inviting Jamaica to this extremely important and timely meeting of the G7 Environment Ministers.

All of the issues highlighted in the agenda have serious implications for the continued growth and development of Jamaica and the countries of the Caribbean, as well as the realization of 'The Future We Want' for present and future generations of CARICOM nationals and indeed all countries around the globe.

I am appreciative of this opportunity to address this plenary.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Jamaica's Vision 2030 National Development Plan, has as one of its National Goals, that "Jamaica has a healthy, natural environment".

Despite Jamaica's emphasis on economic growth and job creation, we continue to be mindful of the delicate balance that must be achieved between our economic pursuits, and the conservation of our natural resources and biodiversity.

The economic development of many Caribbean States are dependent on their natural resource base, so that any environmental anomaly, such as loss of biodiversity, forest cover, coastal erosion, or coral reef degradation, can have a deleterious effect on lives and livelihoods. Very often it is those persons that directly rely on the natural resources who are the most vulnerable.

In all cases, due consideration has been given to our treatment of the environment and the anthropogenic impacts manifested in the ecological challenges that we face.

But all our efforts stand to be derailed if climate change, the single, most profound threat to all our plans, is not addressed. We only have to look at the hurricane

activity in the region last year, and again this year to see that climate change is effectively normalizing the abnormal.

**Jamaica ranks among the most at-risk countries in the world**

I should note here that Jamaica is ranked as one of the most at-risk countries in the world, with approximately 56% of the island's economic assets and 70% of the population located within the coastal zone.

There have been 14 hurricanes and 12 tropical storms in the last decade which have affected life and livelihoods in coastal and inland areas in Jamaica. According to a World Bank study "Sea Level Rise and Storm Surges", the impact of sea level rise and intensified storm surges in Latin America and the Caribbean will be highest in Jamaica.

**Ecosystem based approaches can help diminish this risk**

Estimates from the United Nations (2015) suggest that an investment of $6 billion annually in measures for Disaster Risk Management would save the world from losses of $360 billion over the next 15 years.

It is hoped that the necessary adaptation funds will be made easily available and accessible by the multilaterals, with our G7 partners taking a leadership role. This investment in resilience should be targeted for SIDS, including Caribbean States, who have proven to be the most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. If only traditional approaches are applied, these funds will mainly go to hard infrastructure such as seawalls and breakwaters, unless international policy-makers and national governments actively identify areas where conservation and restoration of natural habitats represent a feasible solution for risk reduction and resilience.

Investments in hard infrastructure for Disaster Risk Management and adaptation are not only expensive but could also prevent the inland migration of coastal ecosystems since they get caught in the squeeze between the rising sea and coastal development.

By acknowledging environmental degradation as one of the chief factors raising risks in coastal areas, governments can take advantage of nature-based solutions as fundamental instruments to reduce disaster and climate risk and enhance adaptation in the long term.

The adoption of nature-based solutions has clear economic benefits.

In fact, investments in natural infrastructure have generated 17 jobs per million dollars spent, which is much higher than other traditional industries including coal, gas, and nuclear energy generation.

A key bottleneck identified for the design and implementation of nature-based infrastructure is the lack of data related to the ecological features that provide coastal protection, as well as the co-benefits provided by ecosystems associated with livelihoods such as fisheries or carbon sequestration. Without this data, it is difficult to develop economic analyses that compare hard and nature-based infrastructure, which is a critical step in the preparation phase for any intervention.

The Government of Jamaica acknowledges that environmental degradation exacerbates disaster and climate risks, as it alters the frequency and intensity of natural hazards and increases the vulnerability of human societies.

Given the role of mangroves in coastline stabilization, erosion control, protection from storm surges and winds, and their ability to adapt to a changing climate, the Government of Jamaica has prioritized this ecosystem to further understand their current ability to reduce risks, and explore areas for restoration to enhance coastal resilience.

**Adaptation strategies for the coastal zone in response to climate change**

The State of Jamaica's Climate published by the Climate Studies Group Mona, University of the West Indies 2017 which examined global and regional climate models using future scenarios of greenhouse gas emissions, provide some consensus about how Jamaica's climate is likely to change in the near future through to the end of the century. What is striking about the projections are the magnitude, rate and frequency of the changes projected for the Jamaican climate under the scenarios that best represent the global trajectory.

With the thrust towards effective climate change adaptation, the Government of Jamaica through one of its agencies, the National Environment and Planning Agency, with support from the World Bank, completed the preparation of the National Coastal Management and Beach Restoration Guidelines for Jamaica (2017).

During this financial year the World Bank will be supporting the project "Assessment and Economic Valuation of Coastal Protection Services Provided by Mangroves in Jamaica". This is part of ongoing activities aimed at building the resilience of the country's coastal ecosystems.

The Jamaica Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Project (DVRP), another World Bank Funded Project, will be enhancing the country's resilience to disaster and climate risk.

A specific component of the project will result in improved risk identification and a reduction in vulnerability in eight coastal communities.

**Financing post-disaster needs**

A country's financial resilience to natural disasters is dependent on its ability to leverage and smanage internal and external resources to finance post-disaster needs. Disaster risk management strategies include risk reduction by increasing investment in mitigation and adaptation, but it also must include a series of alternative instruments for loss financing – risk financing instruments.

Ex-post instruments are sources that do not require advance planning. These instruments include budget reallocation, domestic credit, external credit, tax increase, and donor assistance. Notwithstanding, it is now widely agreed and accepted that ex-ante risk financing instruments which require proactive advance planning and really involves investing in national catastrophe risk management prior to a natural disaster occurring is not only part of sound disaster risk management strategies but also sound fiscal management.

In identifying innovative financing mechanisms and instruments for resilience and building back better. It is important to also recognize some of the challenges posed to SIDS, including Caribbean SIDS. Most Caribbean States are classified as middle income based on the World Bank's classification. Indeed, Jamaica is classified a middle income country while countries such as Antigua and Barbuda and Barbados are classified as high come. This classification greatly limits their access to development funds. We are requesting that SIDS are reclassified for access to concessional funds to be used for building resilience.

SIDS cannot change their behavior sufficiently to impact global warming, we are restricted from helping ourselves because of international rules, while we 'weather' this hurricane seasons, we have to put plans in place or the next …..TIME IS AGAINST US. Hence, we take this opportunity to call upon our development partners to further strengthen their engagement and collaboration with SIDS, including Caribbean SIDS , in increasing their resilience in the immediate term to ensure their survival.

Currently in the Caribbean, the main ex-ante financing option utilized or readily available is catastrophe risk insurance provided by the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF).

CCRIF provides parametric insurance coverage for earthquakes, tropical cyclones and excess rainfall to Caribbean and Central American governments and is currently in the process of developing products for drought as well as products for the fisheries and agriculture sectors.

We urge the international community to support CARICOM SIDS in their drive to recapitalize the CCRIF.

**Key Priority Areas for Jamaica over the Medium Term - 2018 – 2021**

Whilst Jamaica has implemented and continues to implement a range of activities towards risk mitigation and a few activities related to risk financing, there are still many urgent and immediate priorities that need to be addressed. They include:-

- Understanding disaster risk
- Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk
- Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience – employing both risk mitigation and risk financing
- Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

**In terms of Climate Change we will be seeking to:-**

- Upgrade, expand and coordinate the programme of collection of climate-relevant data

- Develop and implement a coordinated information platform/clearing house for climate change

- Develop a coordinated and transparent national MRV system to track technical assistance received, climate finance flows as well as adaption and mitigation activities

- Climate proof national policies and plans and integrate/infuse relevant actions into plans of key social and economic sectors

- Implement activities to address the effects of climate change on the tourism sector; the transport sector; and on human health

**Closing**

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope my contribution today has given you some perspective on the environmental risks facing my beloved homeland, and how we are coping with them. It is also my hope that my presentation will set the stage for fruitful discussions and actions on some of the areas I have just mentioned.

Ladies and gentlemen, the time for talking is long over, we need definitive action and now.

Thank you.