

UN Ocean Conference 2022

Jamaica's Plenary Statement

Jamaica, as a small island developing state and a large ocean economy, welcomes this UN Ocean Conference as yet another opportunity for the global community to commit to collective and decisive action with regards to ocean governance, the conservation and, sustainable management & use of the ocean's resources.

The ocean is an integral part of Jamaica's cultural identity, it is critical to its economic growth, development and the well-being of its people. Indeed, the country's key economic drivers are dependent on a healthy ocean, namely tourism, fisheries, shipping and logistics services. Jamaica is therefore deeply concerned about the impact of climate change on the health of the ocean and the resultant impact on the lives and livelihoods of present and future generation. Sea level rise threatens our coasts, we have experienced significant beach erosion over the years, particularly along our southern and eastern coasts. The world famous Hellshire beach is virtually no more. Ocean acidification and deoxygenation is also a threat to the health of our natural coastal defences, that is, our coral reefs, seagrass beds and mangrove forests.

Hence, it is important for Jamaica, as well as those countries most vulnerable to impacts of climate change, to continue to advocate for a significant decrease in global greenhouse gas emissions in order to ensure the global temperature target of 1.5°C is met. Indeed, for us the slogan of '1.5°C to stay alive' is not just mantra that we frivolously repeat, but for us it is a reality. It should be noted that Jamaica has already submitted its updated NDC's, it is also updating its Climate Change & Emissions Policy Framework to take into account the tenets of the Paris Agreement.

Thereafter, the Government will be pursuing climate change legislation. Jamaica is not just talking as NDC co-chair but acting.

At the last UN Ocean Conference, Jamaica committed to increase its marine protected areas by 2%.

I do however have to report that the country has made significant advancement in this area. We have declared the Black River land and seascapes, approximately 207km², under the country's principal environmental legislation and we will declare the Pedro Cays and surrounding waters, that is 882km², as a protected area in July 2022. This will allow us to achieve the target we had originally set ourselves. It should be noted that approximately 13% of our marine environment is now declared protected under law. This includes Special Fishery Conservation Areas, commonly referred to as fish sanctuaries, which has assisted with the replenishment of the country's fish stock. Additionally, the country is in the process of finalizing protected areas legislation under our primary environmental legislation and will be working on primary Protected Areas legislation this year.

Jamaica is a member of the High Ambition Coalition and are actively working to achieve the 30x30x30 targets. This is the boldness required if we are to turn the tide on the health of the ocean. Jamaica has achieved approximately 25% of its land being protected with the recent declaration of 78,000 hectares, as a protected area in the world renowned Cockpit country, putting it well on the way to

achieve its protection targets for land. I commit to you on behalf of the Government of Jamaica will complete the varying processes to protect a further 10% of its EEZ by 2025, and will surpass its 30% target by 2030.

In terms of marine pollution, Jamaica has over the last three years implemented a ban on specific types of single use plastics. In this regard, we have banned the import, manufacture, distribution and use of plastic bags of a specific dimension, polystyrene foam products used in the food and beverage industry, and plastic drinking straws. The principal intent of the ban is to allow for a decrease of plastic wastes going to our coasts. In this year, the country will focus on the implementation of a deposit refund scheme for plastic bottles, including PET and HDPE bottles, as well as to address microplastics. Jamaica is also promulgating legislation to meet the country's obligations under the MARPOL Convention which seeks to address the pollution from ships, including oil, garbage, noxious substances and air emissions. The country has developed a Green Economy Investment Strategy which will assist in leveraging green investments also in the marine space.

It should be noted that Jamaica is currently pursuing a project, with the support of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) focused on the monitoring of the island's marine areas utilizing nuclear science.

The country is also intensely working on projects and programmes to facilitate ecosystem restoration, including marine and coastal ecosystems, aligned to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. In this regard, the country has developed a National Mangrove Assessment Plan and with the assistance of academia and civil society, have undertaken several projects across the island aimed at restoring our mangrove forests to increase the country's coastal resilience. It is important that the country ensures the health of our vulnerable marine and coastal ecosystems.

Jamaica looks forward to constructive dialogue on the matters related to our ocean at this Conference. We call for enhanced partnerships between and among stakeholders to ensure that our ocean remains a source of prosperity for all.