

Statement by Jamaica
68th Session of the Trade and Development Board
UNCTAD
21st June to 2nd July 2021

Item 3: General Debate

Madame President, Her Excellency Ambassador Maimuna Tarishi of Tanzania,

Acting Secretary-General of UNCTAD Madame Isabelle Durant,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Colleagues,

Madame President,

Jamaica wishes to join the other delegations in extending congratulations to you on your appointment and to extend our best wishes as you oversee the work of the Trade and Development Board. Allow me to also extend congratulations to the new officers on their elections to serve on the various UNCTAD bodies and express commendations for their willingness to continue advancing the work of the Organization. My delegation would also like to place on record our appreciation for the sterling leadership offered by the outgoing President, Ambassador Federico Villegas during his tenure.

Jamaica thanks the Acting Secretary General for her comprehensive annual report and the Secretariat for their efforts in the preparation of the relevant documents and logistical arrangements for this meeting. We also wish to thank them for their judicious approach to ensuring continued work during challenging times as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic.

Importance of UNCTAD

Since the inception of UNCTAD over five decades ago, we can all agree that notwithstanding various challenges, the Conference has managed to remain true to its mandate of providing policy analysis, facilitating consensus building and offering technical assistance for its members. Jamaica, like many developing countries

attaches great importance to UNCTAD and appreciates its commitment to supporting the trade and development aspirations of its members.

At this critical juncture, as countries continue to grapple with the economic downturn and health crisis brought on by the Covid -19 pandemic, UNCTAD has a critical role to play in the recovery efforts as well as building resilience for future crisis.

Madame President,

The Covid -19 pandemic has exposed the frailties of our economies and magnified some of the perennial issues which have hindered the full integration of many developing countries in the global trading system. Key among these issues include high levels of debt, over reliance on one or few economic sectors such as tourism, high levels of vulnerability and the digital divide which has further widened. The pandemic has also derailed the progress made in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the most vulnerable in our societies have been hard hit. While vaccination efforts are ongoing, the roll out in many developing countries continue to be very slow which means it will take a much longer period before there are more positive signs of global economic recovery.

Multilateralism

The rapid spread of the virus across the globe has underscored the interconnectedness of the global community and reemphasized the importance of global solidarity on issues which affect all of us. Jamaica like many developing countries believes in multilateralism and remains concerned by the notable signs of fractures in the multilateral architecture. The disruptions brought on by the pandemic should be used as an opportunity for us to reset multilateral cooperation and strengthen our resolve to collaborate, coordinate, partner and build consensus. UNCTAD is well placed to serve as an interlocutor within the multilateral system in keeping with its three pillars.

Nairobi Maafikiano

As the chapters of the Nairobi Maafikiano comes to a close, Jamaica is satisfied that the Organization has managed to achieve excellent results over the last five years including a sharper focus on helping countries to attract investments for the Sustainable Development Goals, assisting Governments with fine-tuning national trade policies, advising Governments on the implications of climate change on trade and

development , working with countries to design policies to enhance their productive capacities and tap into the opportunities offered by e-commerce and new technologies.

UNCTAD XV

Madame President, as preparations continue in earnest for the upcoming Fifteenth Ministerial Conference to be hosted by our sister nation Barbados in October, Jamaica is fully engaged in the process and is looking forward to a transformative and ambitious outcome. This Conference will provide members with the opportunity to not only build on the rich legacy of the Nairobi Maakifiano but to reimagine and redefine our approach to trade and development all while juxtaposing UNCTAD at the center of the global recovery efforts. If there was ever a time for an UNCTAD it is now.

UNCTAD XV is a golden opportunity for us to demonstrate to the international community the continued relevance and agility of UNCTAD within the multilateral architecture and provide a clear articulation of what the Organization can contribute to the “building back better” process. It is quite opportune that the Conference has coincided with the appointment of a new Secretary General, Ms. Rebacca Grynspan, the first female Secretary general of UNCTAD. We congratulate, once more, the Government of Costa Rica in that regard

For Jamaica, there are several issues which are of key importance as we deliberate the Organization’s future work programme and negotiate the Ministerial Outcome. Some of our priority areas include:

- Digital Transformation –if developing countries are to realize economic and social development in the 21st century, there must be a focus on digital transformation. Developing countries need support in narrowing the digital divide to ensure greater connectivity, spur innovation and modernize MSMEs.
- Climate Change- The impacts of climate change particularly on small, open and vulnerable countries like Jamaica is having a debilitating effect on efforts aimed at economic growth and social progress. Building resilience will be critical in this regard.
- Financing for Development and issues relating to debt – the pandemic has triggered the re-emergence of unsustainable debt burdens for many countries, reducing the available fiscal resources to pursue national economic development objectives.
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - UNCTAD will have a pivotal role to play in aligning support to the economic dimension of the 2030 Agenda, ensuring that this final “decade of action” is not lost, and that no citizen or country is left behind.

My delegation remains encouraged by the ongoing negotiations and we are hopeful that we will accelerate our pace and continue to arrive at landing zones to ensure the conclusion of the negotiations before the Ministerial Conference.

Conclusion

In closing Madame President, Jamaica continues to be very appreciative of all the work and continued support to our countries by UNCTAD at various levels. We look forward to UNCTAD continuing its delivery on its mandate as well as to a successful UNCTAD Ministerial Conference in October.

Jamaica associates itself with the statement delivered by Afghanistan on behalf of the G77 and China Group and that of Guatemala on behalf of the GRULAC.

I thank you Madame President.