



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

STATEMENT BY

**THE HONOURABLE MARK J. GOLDING
MINISTER OF JUSTICE**

AT THE

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY HIGH-LEVEL THEMATIC DEBATE
IN SUPPORT OF THE PROCESS TOWARDS
THE 2016 SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON THE WORLD DRUG PROBLEM**

**UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK
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Mr. President,
Mr. Deputy Secretary-General,
Colleague Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to express my appreciation to the United Nations for arranging this important Thematic Debate as one of the preparatory events leading up to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on the World Drug Problem in 2016. This is of tremendous importance to delegations like mine, which unfortunately do not have a permanent presence in Vienna.

Today's discussions are significant, as we seek to create greater understanding and awareness of the challenges and opportunities that are presented to the world by drug use, drug abuse, drug trafficking and the decades of international cooperation in the so-called "War on Drugs".

The geographic location of the Caribbean region, and our porous borders, have meant that the region has for a long time been used as a trans-shipment point for drugs, with the volumes involved being impacted by the relative availability of other routes such as Central America. The Caribbean's coordination in this area falls under the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), within the Region's Crime and Security Strategy. Nevertheless, security measures implemented to tackle the flow of illicit drugs are often insufficient to deal with the more sophisticated methods employed by traffickers.

Given these realities, we are seized with the importance of suppressing illegal international drug trafficking drug and the illegal export of drugs, which is a national security priority for Jamaica, as we grapple with the corrosive implications of narco-trafficking for governance, law and order, health and socio-economic development.

Jamaica remains committed to strengthening programmes to reduce supply and demand, while honouring our existing international obligations at all levels. However, our experiences over past decades have taught that the World Drug Problem has multi-faceted implications. We have come to realise that past approaches, encapsulated in the notion of the War on Drugs, have not achieved their purpose of eradicating illegal production, trans-shipment and distribution.

Indeed, by adopting an approach to the problem that is insufficiently rounded and holistic, we have, sadly:

- facilitated the enrichment and strengthening of transnational organized crime,
- oppressed indigenous groups that have constitutional rights that must be respected, and
- alienated and criminalised youth populations.

By the narrowness of our approaches, we have contributed to undermining sustainable development, democratic processes and the rule of law in many countries around the World.

It is now widely accepted that there needs to be a more holistic approach to this Problem – an approach that, in addition to effective law enforcement, places priority on other important elements of the problem, such as health and wellness, human rights, human development and safety, with the aim of reducing the negative effects on people's lives and the impact on vulnerable populations.

The opportunities for participation in the discourse in the lead-up to 2016 provide a chance for engagement, early identification of the areas of advocacy and concern, and a qualitative assessment of the levels of support on common positions among like-minded countries. In this way, we are being enabled to shape the outcome of the UNGASS 2016.

Our position, therefore, is that UNGASS 2016 should not be a forum for rubber-stamping past agreements and approaches. Rather, it should be grasped as an opportunity to look with fresh eyes at the past actions, with a view to developing new approaches that are adaptable to our changing environments. This requires us to be frank and transparent in our discussions and exchanges.

These are some of the outcomes that Jamaica would like to see emerging from UNGASS 2016:

- Jamaica is in favour of the establishment of an expert advisory group to review the UN drug-policy control architecture, its system-wide coherence, treaty inconsistencies and the legal tension of cannabis regulation.
- Jamaica also considers that a Civil Society Task Force should be supported, to ensure meaningful participation in the UNGASS process.
- We also support the coordination and participation of all UN entities in relation to the World Drug Problem going forward, as this will engender a more holistic approach to dealing with the issues.
- The UNGASS should clearly mandate the direction to be taken in promulgating the new Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem.

Ultimately, Jamaica would like to see the existing treaty regime afford greater autonomy to individual State Parties in the design of domestic policies and laws, especially in relation to cannabis. Our constitutional arrangements, and our social, cultural and historic conditions and traditions, require us to be able to fashion our own rules in this regard, in the interests of social justice and a coherent and inclusive society.

We remain fully committed to cooperating with other States in the fight against narco-trafficking, and in the suppression of the illegal trans-shipment, illegal cultivation and illegal export of drugs. We have strengthened our laws to tackle criminal organisations, money-laundering, human trafficking and of ills that form part of the World Drug Problem, and will continue to strengthen our law enforcement capacity in these areas. However, we feel that, in their domestic environments, State Parties must be afforded the autonomy in how we deal with our own population in relation to cannabis, provided that this is done in a manner that duly respects and protects the legitimate interests of other nations.

We look forward to the thought-provoking ideas and the distillation of the issues during this dialogue in efforts to address the challenges of the world drug problem.

Thank you.