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PLENARY SESSION OF THE IX SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

REMARKS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAMAICA, ANDREW HOLNESS

It is a pleasure to be here in the wonderful city of Los Angeles for this Ninth Summit of the Americas, and to join fellow leaders from across the hemisphere, recommitting to our shared values, forging new solutions to common challenges, and undertaking realistic actions in support of Building a Sustainable, Resilient, and Equitable Future.

I thank the United States and the City of Los Angeles, for the arrangements made to host this significant Summit. I also commend the Biden-Harris Administration for its leadership of the Summit process, and for its general posture of listening and paying attention to the particular concerns and challenges of small developing states within the hemisphere.

Excellencies,

The COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, the conflict in Europe and the consequential impact on supply chains, food and energy security, are challenging the order of the world as we know it. All the countries here, regardless of economic size and institutional maturity, have been affected by the same challenges. These challenges have led to the erosion of hard-won developmental gains. While, thankfully, Jamaica has been able to see some sustained growth over 6 quarters, predicted levels of growth for the region, are not robust.

The first Summit of the Americas in Miami in 1994, began with a proposal for the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas, an ambitious plan to eliminate trade barriers throughout the region.

While subsequent policy disagreements led to this worthy initiative not being fully achieved, it did lead to the establishment of free trade arrangements, between the United States and a number of countries in the region.

This Ninth Summit comes at a pivotal time in global history, and, if it is to fulfil the promise of the moment, it must serve as an opportunity to announce a new blueprint for regional cooperation.

We must endeavour to create a new Regional Order with the same lofty ambition as the first Summit in 1994. We welcome the announcement of the Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity.

Jamaica is keenly interested in a successful outcome to this Summit, particularly with emphasis on the following areas:

Food and Energy Security – The Americas have access to an abundance of agricultural supplies, as well as renewable and other energy resources. We need greater intra-regional technical co-operation, trade and finance to harness these resources, to make our hemisphere less vulnerable to global supply disruptions.

Climate Finance - Urgent access to climate finance remains a critical priority. The hemisphere has entered another hurricane season, a stark reminder of what could lie ahead for the next six months.

For countries like Jamaica, which are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change;

- global emissions must be capped to net zero,
- adaptation and mitigation solutions must be implemented and,
- attention must be given to loss and damage mechanisms.

More broadly, access to financing for small and vulnerable economies, especially highly indebted middle-income countries, must be a priority in efforts towards recovery. Therefore, we welcome the announcement of PACC 2030.

Human Capital and Skills Development – As the nature of work and skills change, with the onset of the Fourth Industrial Revolution; and with net migration of skills from poorer economies to richer economies, several countries in the region, like Jamaica, face a skills gap which could become a binding constraint on our growth horizon. The region needs a thoughtful and coordinated approach in facilitating massive investments in Human Capital Development while at the same time, pursuing nearshore policies to bring jobs to workers in their home countries.

Finally, Security and trafficking in Small Arms –A significant number of countries are experiencing an increase in illegally trafficked weapons and small arms into our borders from within the region. This is increasing the capabilities of criminals, and increasing violent crimes, particularly homicides. Much more needs to be done to control illegally trafficked weapons in our region.

Excellencies,

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated our inter-connectedness and our inter-dependence and that no one is safe until we are all safe.

This kind of inclusive approach is critical to meeting our challenges, and we regret that this Summit did not involve all the countries of the Americas.

The Action Plans on democratic governance, digital transformation, our green future, equitable, sustainable and renewable energy and health resilience, should be predicated on the participation of the entire region, while reaffirming our democratic principles.

Excellencies,

As we strive to increase resilience, improve accountability and ensure better opportunities for growth and prosperity, Jamaica remains committed to the Summit process.

We will continue to work with all hemispheric partners so that our deliberations here in Los Angeles, will make a difference and allow for a better future for our respective peoples.

This region of the world has all the resources to secure peace and prosperity for all the people of the hemisphere. We have the leadership in this room to make it happen. Let us commit, to using our best efforts to make the dialogue, plans and agreements a reality.

I thank you.