



STATEMENT IN THE SENATE

DELIVERED BY

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE KAMINA JOHNSON SMITH
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE AND
LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

ON

- **THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE COUNCIL FOR
FOREIGN AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS (COFCOR);**
 - **THE ELEVENTH UK-CARIBBEAN FORUM;**
 - **THE INAUGURAL JAMAICA-UK STRATEGIC DIALOGUE;**
- AND**
- **THE MEETING OF HAITIAN STAKEHOLDERS**

16TH JUNE 2023

Mr. President,

I am pleased to keep our nation abreast of the work done by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, by way of Ministerial Statements to this Honourable Senate. I rise, therefore, to provide an update and to report on four major undertakings which my team and I had the honour of hosting here in Kingston, namely:

- The Twenty-Sixth Regular Meeting of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR), held from 16th to 17th May;
- The Eleventh UK-Caribbean Forum held on 18th May;
- The Inaugural Jamaica-UK Strategic Dialogue held on 19th May; and
- The Meeting of Haitian Stakeholders held from 11th to 13th June.

The Twenty-Sixth Regular Meeting of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR)

Mr. President,

The Twenty-Sixth Regular Meeting of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR) welcomed Her Excellency Dr. Carla Barnett, CARICOM Secretary-General, on her first official visit to Jamaica and brought together almost full representation of member states at the Foreign Minister level, in pursuit of closer foreign policy coordination.

The Meeting marked the beginning of Jamaica's one-year chairmanship of the Council, and was the first in-person Regular Meeting since 2019. Of interest to Jamaica and

featuring high among the outcomes of this engagement, were the deliberations relating to:

- CARICOM's engagements with high-level representatives of Japan, Slovenia and Spain,
- Endorsement of Jamaica's candidatures;
- Processes underway at the United Nations towards the implementation of Agenda 2030, including in relation to Health, Climate Change, Financing for Development and the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, among others.;

On the margins of this Meeting, I was pleased to sign, together with the Honourable Kerrie Symmonds, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados, a Memorandum of Understanding for Deepening Bilateral Cooperation.

Eleventh UK-Caribbean Forum

Mr. President,

The Eleventh UK-Caribbean Forum was convened in-person for the first time in over seven years. In my capacity as COFCOR Chair, I was honoured to co-Chair the Forum with The Right Honourable James Cleverly, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom. Jamaica was also pleased to welcome the Vice-Minister for Economic Affairs and International Cooperation of the Dominican Republic and the Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba to participate in these discussions.

Important exchanges were held matters related to trade and investment; financing for development; strategies to address climate change and adaptation; and reparatory justice.

During Jamaica's intervention on behalf of the Caribbean in relation to Trade and Investment, I emphasised the importance of operationalising the UK-Caribbean Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) to stimulate trade and investment, as well as the need to focus on its application to services as we seek to diversify our economies. Similarly, I communicated on the regions behalf, the need to continue to pay significant attention to the concerns of the Windrush Generation and their descendants, particularly in matters of compensation.

Inaugural Jamaica-UK Strategic Dialogue

Mr. President,

I was pleased to welcome UK Foreign Secretary Cleverly on May 19th to the Ministry's Headquarters at the Hugh Lawson Shearer Building, for the Inaugural Jamaica-UK Strategic Dialogue and the first visit of a UK Foreign Secretary to Jamaica in over two decades.

Members would appreciate that Jamaica and the UK share strong historical, people-to-people, cultural and commercial links. Importantly, the UK is home to one of Jamaica's largest diaspora populations and is one of our largest trading partners. The inauguration of the Strategic Dialogue provides, therefore, a formal, focused framework for our engagement at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

Outcomes and Opportunities

Mr. President,

As a result of that very involved and focused week of engagements, I am pleased to report positive outcomes and promising opportunities for Jamaica and the Caribbean, in the following five cross-cutting areas which are of particular interest to the Parliament and to the nation, namely:

- National Security;
- Climate Change and Adaptation;
- STEAM Education;
- Windrush; and
- The protracted crisis in Haiti.

Partnership on National Security

Mr. President,

Following the Strategic Dialogue, we co-signed a Joint Communiqué, as well as an Aide Memoire on the Violence Prevention Partnership. Through this Partnership, the UK will be providing fifteen million pounds (£15m) just over 2.9 billion dollars, for a six-year project to support the Government to address the root causes of crime at the community and school-based levels.

Lack of investment has allowed crime and violence to remain one of the biggest threats to Jamaica's development and the welfare of our people. However, this Government has

made unparalleled investments in national security with encouraging results, including overall decreases in all major crimes.

Foreign Secretary Cleverly, therefore, expressed his government's willingness to partner on the fifteen million pounds (£15m) programme, focused on evidence-based policy-making, including the public health approach to violence as discussed at the recent CARICOM symposium held in Trinidad.

Partnership On Climate Adaptation

Mr. President,

Coming out of the Inaugural Strategic Dialogue was the announcement by Foreign Secretary Cleverly of seven million pounds (£7m), over 1.3 billion JMD, to support climate adaptation and mitigate against the pernicious effects of climate change in Jamaica.

Climate change is, of course, one of the cross-cutting issues on the Agenda of the COFCOR and the UK-Caribbean Forum. Its effects have the potential to derail our efforts to achieve the global sustainable development goals and our national development goals.

The additional funding in excess of 1.3 billion JMD will, therefore, help to leverage increased access to climate finance as part of Jamaica's pioneering role in the Access to Finance Taskforce. Jamaica will play a key role in exploring an innovative approach to simplifying and scaling up international climate and nature finance provision and share best practices with the most climate vulnerable countries.

Partnership on STEAM Education

Mr. President,

The Foreign Secretary and I witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education and Youth, the National Education Trust and the British Council, for a five-year programme of cooperation on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) Education.

The collaboration will build and enhance the capacity of teachers and assist the Ministry of Education and Youth with its education management system as well as building STEAM education delivery capacity. Importantly, seven new purpose-built STEAM academies will come on stream to maximise creativity, curiosity, intellectual rigour, and innovation – we need to build the foundation for their operation as well as the infrastructure – this MOU is intended to support that process.

As the Government positions Jamaica as the technological hub of the Caribbean, the Government's drive for STEAM education will be critical to bring more Jamaicans into the labour market, match the needs of the digital technology-driven market and properly train Jamaicans to take advantage of those opportunities.

My team and I at the Foreign Ministry take our role seriously as we leverage international partnerships for specialised education in order to enable Jamaicans to take advantage of emerging opportunities.

Windrush

Mr. President,

This year marks seventy-five (75) years since the Windrush left Victoria Pier at Kingston Harbour and docked at Tilbury Docks in Essex with five hundred and thirty-nine (539) Jamaican residents and several more from the wider Caribbean. In the years that followed, thousands more Caribbean people would arrive to rebuild Britain and drive its socio-economic rebirth, in spite of the many daunting challenges.

Both the UK-Caribbean Forum and the Jamaica-UK Strategic Dialogue provided opportunities for frank exchanges on immigration and residency difficulties being faced by the Windrush generation and their descendants, as well as steps taken to date by the UK Government to address the unjust treatment meted out to them.

I was able to reiterate our concerns about the implementation of the outstanding issues under the Windrush Scheme and to encourage that these be addressed with the sensitivity they deserve, fully valuing the Diaspora in the space that they now call home. The Parties agreed that commitments made by the UK must be honoured in a timely manner.

Crisis in Haiti

Finally, Mr. President,

I would like to update the Senate and the nation on Jamaica's efforts to support our Haitian brothers and sisters in their search to bring an end to the protracted political, humanitarian, and security crises being experienced in that country.

CARICOM remains seized of the importance of its Good Offices role and its commitment to keeping Haiti on the international agenda in support of Haitian-led efforts. The Most Honourable Andrew Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica, continues to take a lead role in CARICOM's response. Members would be aware that Prime Minister Holness led a one-day Special Mission to Port-au-Prince on February 27, 2023, that I was honoured to join.

During those sessions in Haiti, there was clear consensus that security was an immediate and critical concern. Some had also expressed that while addressing security is paramount, more inclusive and broader dialogue was necessary. It was also made clear on various levels that many Haitian stakeholders would wish to have the opportunity to widen the political consensus towards the holding of national elections under the appropriate conditions.

Following on that Mission, CARICOM endorsed and accepted Jamaica's offer to host a meeting of Haitian stakeholders, to advance consensus-building and encourage the much-needed return to stability.

Mr. President,

The Government of Jamaica was convinced that with the right spirit and opportunities to facilitate inclusive participation in a neutral environment, we could create the space for dialogue and consultation, based on mutual respect, openness and goodwill.

Therefore, in a spirit of solidarity and brotherhood, between 11th and 13th June, Jamaica hosted our Haitian brothers and sisters for the Kingston Talks. We were pleased to have been able to provide a secure and enabling environment for the serious discussions in which the Prime Minister of Haiti, His Excellency Ariel Henry and a broad cross-section of

Haitian society, including groups representing political, human rights, civil society, religious, youth and gender interests engaged. This they did under the guidance of the Eminent Persons Group comprised of three former Caribbean Prime Ministers, namely: Mr. Bruce Golding of Jamaica; the Right Honourable Perry Christie of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas; and Dr. the Honourable Kenny Anthony of Saint Lucia.

Critical moral support to the talks and regional leadership were provided by The Honourable Philip Davis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas and Chairman of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM, and the Most Honourable Andrew Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica. Important institutional assistance was provided by the CARICOM Secretariat.

Mr. President,

The outcome as we now acknowledge, and since made public in a statement by the Eminent Persons Group, confirm that while no final agreement was achieved, the Stakeholders were able to address the core issues of the interim governance measures needed to restore confidence in the transition and to ensure that the government could deliver its commitments. These commitments include the critical issue of security and stability; the organisation of credible general elections to choose a legitimate and representative government; constitutional reform; and the pursuance of fundamental reforms required to preclude a repeat of the current crisis.

Haitian Prime Minister, Ariel Henry, committed to greater inclusiveness in governance through the establishment of a government of national unity, beginning with working with the partners of the December 21 Accord to increase the number of members of the High Transition Council (HTC) in order to include representatives of a wider group of stakeholders. The representatives committed to continuing the dialogue as the CARICOM

Good Offices process progresses. These were all very significant and so we trust they can be preserved and built on.

As a mark of its dedication to the cause, the Eminent Persons Group has committed to go to Haiti to continue these consultations within the next several weeks.

Participants thanked CARICOM for initiating this meeting and expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister Holness and to the people of Jamaica for their warm hospitality. I pause here to acknowledge with immense gratitude, the sterling efforts of my team at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade for the exceptional role they played on behalf of Jamaica, in supporting this important mission. Together we were proud to have continued the tradition of service to the region and in particular to our sister country, Haiti.

We believe that the Kingston Talks were a critical step in the right direction. Jamaica is committed to continuing the journey along with the rest of the region and indeed, the international community toward satisfactory and sustainable Haitian-led solutions for the Haitian people.

Mr. President,

Jamaica remains convinced of the need for sustained international attention on Haiti. Yesterday, in my capacity as COFCOR Chairman, I participated in a Ministerial meeting on Haiti convened by the Foreign Minister of Canada which saw the participation of high-level representation from a broad cross-section of countries from regions around the world, all conscious of the special burden we share to bring necessary attention to Haiti's needs.

This very morning, Prime Minister Holness is addressing a meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) *Ad Hoc* Advisory Group on Haiti, of which Jamaica is a member, on the humanitarian crisis in Haiti. Our engagement also finds expression at the Organisation of American States (OAS) through the Working Group on Haiti. Our resolve to support Haiti is undiminished. The Government of Jamaica is determined to see Haiti return to the stability and well-being that her people so well deserve.

Closing

Mr. President,

This is but a glimpse of the diligent work being done by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

My team and I at the Foreign Ministry are proud of what we continue to accomplish and to contribute to our nation's and our region's stability, development and prosperity.

I thank you.