

Statement by the Prime Minister of Jamaica
The Most Honourable Andrew Holness, ON, MP at the
High-Level Luncheon: An Urgent Call for Countries to Partner for Climate Action
New York
September 22, 2019

My colleague cohost Prime Minister Solberg of Norway

Other Heads of State and Heads of Government present

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to co-host with Prime Minister Solberg, this High-Level Luncheon, and I am grateful for your overwhelming support in response to our urgent call for countries to partner for climate action.

For Jamaica, it was important to emphasize the term “partnership” even before talking about climate finance. Why? Because we believe a partnership approach would generate the type of response across countries necessary to create long-term mobilization of the financial resources small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs) urgently need to prepare, adapt and indeed thrive in the wake of climate change.

The presence of Heads of State and Heads of Government, Ministers, UN and other officials, key partners from near and far, is testament to the importance the international community attaches to climate finance.

Within the context of the Climate Action Summit, Jamaica submitted to the UN Secretary-General, a plan to enhance our 2020 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC); which includes more ambitious targets for:

- renewable energy,
- emissions reductions,
- sustainable land use and forest management,

- low carbon transport,
- increased investments in sustainable infrastructure and;
- enhanced fiscal resiliency.

However, our NDCs can rapidly turn into wishful thinking if the right blend and scale of financial resources are not in place to catalyze public and private sector investments in climate smart solutions.

The good news is that we have the right mechanism in place to support the rapid financing of sustainable, low carbon projects in developing countries and to help these countries adapt to climate change.

As we have all worked directly or indirectly to create this financing mechanism, the Green Climate Fund is truly our Fund.

An ambitious and successful replenishment will enable our Green Climate Fund to fulfill its role of channeling adequate and predictable climate finance to where it is most needed. I am confident that our fund will continue to respond to the needs and ambitions of developing countries. But we need to place it in a position to effectively do so!

I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the GCF's resource mobilization strategy for SIDS and LDCs. The IPCC 1.5 Special Report is critical for members of AOSIS where the impacts of climate change are acute. It is not an overstatement to say that for SIDS, climate risks are more significant than previously assessed, loss and damage to critical infrastructure are reaching critical levels as temperatures rise, marine and coastal ecosystems have sustained irreversible loss, and our people live with the fear of the effects of more frequent and extreme weather events.

Moreover, our physical exposure to climate risk negatively affects our fiscal balances and debt sustainability, which in turn degrades our international credit ratings, making it more difficult for our countries to access the international capital market on affordable terms.

Given these circumstances, we look to our Green Climate Fund to finance our climate-related public investment needs as it is structured to operate with a comparatively higher risk appetite than many private funds. I therefore recommend and encourage its leadership to promote and pilot new and innovative approaches to climate financing, including climate debt swaps, credit enhancement instruments and insurance structures. For us, loans are no longer a feasible option, as even at concessional rates they further distort our external debt profiles, thereby exacerbating our macro-economic imbalances.

In moving towards the next programme cycle, and while the pipeline of projects in the GCF's Simplified Approval Process (SAP) continues to lengthen, I encourage our Fund to ensure that SIDS and LDCs benefit equitably from this pilot scheme.

I also urge the Fund to ensure that its review process is further simplified. Our communities that are being impacted have tried and proven innovative solutions that can easily be scaled-up and transformed into national programmes.

But we need to empower them!

Recent reports suggest that the total financing needs in SIDS and LDCs could potentially reach \$4.4 trillion US dollars, with an annual estimated financing need of \$349 billion US dollars per year.

Colleagues, we are just starting to fully grasp the scale of the adaptation financing needs as climate related events become more frequent and severe. With a well replenished GCF, I believe investment and innovation in climate action will increase exponentially. I, therefore, implore our partners with the ability and resources to do so to place the GCF in a position to support the exponential increase in climate financing demand.

Developed country partners, including those represented here today, have committed to mobilising the long overdue and likely underestimated, \$100 billion US dollars per annum from public and private sources. Prime Minister Solberg, I would like to acknowledge the leadership shown by Norway, which has pledged to double its contribution to our Green Climate Fund. This type of serious effort and bold leadership is what is required.

Last year, when the Secretary-General asked me to partner with President Macron of France in undertaking the political advocacy required to mobilise the sums needed to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement, I thought it was a very tall order. Today, thanks to the increased ambition and commitment shown by countries such as France, Norway, the United Kingdom and Germany, I am filled with hope that we are on the right track. I am confident that in the coming days and months we will receive ambitious pledges from a significant number of our developed country partners.

In closing, let me recognize the efforts of the GCF Executive Director, Yannick Glemarec and his team, for their commitment and diligent efforts made on our behalf. I assure you of our continued support to ensure that the GCF fulfils its mandate to accelerate climate action in developing countries.

Thank you all for being here and I now turn the floor over to Prime Minister Solberg for her remarks.

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