



**2007 Substantive Session of the Economic and Social Council
Annual Ministerial Review**

**Statement by Ambassador Vilma McNish
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***Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger,
including through the global partnership for development
(Item 2b)***

Geneva, 4 July 2007

Mr. President,

Jamaica aligns itself with the statement by Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. President,

This first Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council provides an opportunity for us to take stock and assess the progress made in implementing the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The interrelationship between economic growth and poverty reduction is indisputable. However, empirical evidence shows that this linkage is at best tenuous unless there is a broad-based approach that promotes pro-poor sustained economic growth.

The global economy has shown exceptionally strong performance over the last decade. Notwithstanding the positive growth, the global poverty index remains stubbornly high. The report of the Secretary General confirms that even as there

has been global progress in the various dimensions of poverty, the rate of improvement is insufficient to achieve the MDGs. It is estimated that 800 million people still live on less than \$1 per day. Indeed, by 2015 when MDG target of halving extreme poverty is assessed, it is estimated that, if current trends continue, some 600 million people will still be living in extreme poverty.

The fact is that even as there has been strong growth performance in the world economy, this has been uneven and many developing countries have not been able to reap the benefits of globalization and trade liberalization.

The regional forum for Latin America and the Caribbean which was held in May in Brazil in preparation for the Ministerial Review highlighted the fact that on average the region is on the right track to meet the MDG1 target with increased public expenditure on health and education. There are, however, regional and sub-regional disparities, particularly in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. The overall achievement in poverty reduction is also distorted by persistent income inequalities.

The forum also highlighted the fact that growth alone is not sufficient to reduce poverty. In order to combat inequality, employment generation and decent work must become a higher national policy priority and further progress in mainstreaming equity across public sector policies is critical. Policies that support investment, growth and entrepreneurship are essential to job creation efforts.

Mr. President,

The Government of Jamaica is committed to providing the necessary resources for the implementation of programmes to combat poverty and enable the empowerment of vulnerable groups in pursuit of MDG1. The main target groups of such programmes are children, youth, women, persons with disability and the elderly. Poverty reduction initiatives undertaken by the government are focused

on the intergenerational transmission of poverty and how human capacities can be improved to break the cycle of poverty.

In 2005, poverty was reduced by 2.1 per cent, bringing the poverty level to 14.8 per cent. Since 1995, the overall poverty level has declined by 12.7 per cent. This reduction reflects the impact of several factors, including positive trends in certain aspects of the economy, particularly construction and tourism, with direct and indirect multiplier effects on employment creation and overall consumption levels. Social assistance programmes, in particular cash transfers and income generation programmes, have also influenced poverty levels island-wide. Remittances have also been a significant factor in poverty reduction.

An important aspect of our poverty reduction policy is to view the poor not only as the target market or consumers but as creators of wealth, innovators and entrepreneurs. We believe that entrepreneurial activity is a means of social mobility for the poor and a contributor to economic growth. In this context, a key mechanism to support the poor is in the form of micro-financing and small business loans. Offering credit and allowing the poor to build credit, builds trust, social capital and social responsibility. The objective is to improve the quality of life for all in a sustainable way.

Jamaica is on target to meet the MDG1. But this could be easily jeopardized as a result of the challenges and constraints to poverty reduction.

The classification of Jamaica as a middle income developing country has made our situation somewhat precarious as it oftentimes precludes sufficient attention by the international community to our special concerns. It also impedes access to aid and development financing. It is important to stress, however, that middle income countries do face significant challenges to their efforts to achieve self-sustaining financial capacity that will enable them to foster economic growth and reduce poverty. Previous high-level meetings of ECOSOC have devoted

attention to this issue and the 2005 World Summit specifically acknowledged that support should be extended to this category of countries. As has been repeated here, MICs should not be penalized for the advances they have made but rather, should continue to receive support from the international community for their development efforts. The Inter-governmental Conference on Middle Income Countries in Madrid earlier this year quite rightly pointed out that support to these MICs was important because their development could have a positive impact on the international system as a whole.

This situation is compounded by the erosion of preferential market access to the European Union under new WTO rules. These preferences hitherto guaranteed markets for countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group for commodities such as sugar, bananas and cotton. We now face the prospect of even further erosion of preferences with the threat of a possible unilateral renunciation by the EU of the Sugar Protocol despite its development dimension.

The vulnerability of small island states such as Jamaica is also a factor which can have a deleterious effect on sustained poverty reduction efforts. Here, vulnerability is defined not only in terms of small size and relative capacity but also in terms of the ability to react to external economic and financial shocks. Added to this is of course our susceptibility to natural disasters, such as hurricanes, which can wreak havoc on entire economies of Caribbean states. Climate change therefore is a critical issue for small island developing states such as my own and the importance of efforts to mitigate global warming as an integral element in poverty reduction strategies cannot be overstated.

Other challenges such as HIV/AIDS, the energy crisis, and the brain drain, all demand priority attention if developing countries are to successfully meet the target of halving poverty by the target date.

Mr. President,

There is consensus that all countries have the primary responsibility for their own development and that effective national strategies are critical for poverty reduction. Such strategies must be anchored by sound macroeconomic policies, good governance, and the rule of law. By the same token, the full implementation of the global partnership for development is crucial, in fact indispensable, to achieve the goals of the development agenda. This partnership involves commitments not only to mobilize domestic resources, but also increased financial and technical cooperation for development, sustainable debt financing and external debt relief. It also involves greater coherence and cooperation among multilateral financial, trade and development institutions as a means of promoting real dialogue.

While it is acknowledged that there has been some improvement in the commitment of resources for official development assistance and debt relief, the lack of sufficient resources to implement the development goals remains a matter of concern. This is evident in the area of trade, with the stalled Doha Round negotiations, and the participation of developing countries in global economic governance. Developed countries have not lived up There is an obvious need for concrete initiatives to advance the development agenda. The Annual Review meeting along with the Development Cooperation Forum which will be launched later this week, could perhaps be the vehicle through which there could be movement on elaborating the necessary framework for action in order to create a more equitable, balanced financial, economic and social global order.

Mr. President,

The eradication of poverty and hunger is quite appropriately at the forefront of the international agenda. Significant progress has been made but much more needs to be done if we are to advance meaningfully and implement the development agenda, including the MDGs, in a timely and effective manner. The challenge is for all of us to live up to our respective commitments in the true spirit of global partnership.

Thank you.