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RC/2013/030

8 October, 2013

Dear Minister Pickersgill:

**Ongoing Activities of the United Nations' Agencies in the Portland Bight Protected Area**

Kindly refer to our conversation on 23 September 2013. As indicated, I am enclosing a note on the ongoing activities of the United Nations' Agencies in the Portland Bight Protected Area (PBPA). The note also highlights the support that the United Nations (UN) can provide to the Government in creating jobs, preserving the integrity of nation's environmental integrity and advancing Jamaica's profile as a leader in the area of climate change.

The UN reiterates its commitment to work in partnership with the Government of Jamaica and contribute to achieving the Vision 2030 Jamaica, National Development Plan. We stand prepared to support you in meeting the objective of inclusive growth through decent jobs creation and enhancing inclusive and sustainable development. While highlighting vital issues that require careful consideration prior to making a development investment in a protected area, the note also contains suggestions on the assistance that the UN can provide to enable you to arrive at a meticulous decision to advance the Government's vision and better the quality of life of all Jamaicans.

As I had also touched on during our meeting, I was delighted to have an opportunity to visit the Goat Islands recently. The array and diversity of flora and fauna is truly impressive - the accompanying dolphins indeed put up an excellent show. It would be an honour for me to have the opportunity to accompany you on your visit to the Goat Islands should you consider to make a trip.

Please accept, Honourable Minister, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arun Kashyap', written over a horizontal line.

Arun Kashyap  
Resident Coordinator  
United Nations

**Hon. Robert Pickersgill**  
Minister  
Ministry of Water, Land, Environment & Climate Change  
The Towers, 25 Dominica Drive  
Kingston 5

Enclosure



## **Ongoing Activities of United Nations Agencies in the Portland Bight Protected Area in Jamaica - An Update**

### **1. BACKGROUND**

The United Nations in Jamaica is committed to supporting the Government in achievement of its Vision 2030, Jamaica - National Development Plan. Being a trusted partner of the Government, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) supports demand based national capacity development and provides the optimum evidence-based advice and best practices to promote inclusive and equitable development for all that respects human rights and complies with obligations under international Conventions and Treaties.

As we approach 2015 and prepare to take account of the progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the global community is heartened by endorsement of the road map for creation of an inclusive Post-2015 agenda by Heads of States during the recent UN General Assembly. The single framework and sets of goals merge poverty eradication and sustainable development and motivate all stakeholders to work together to transform the lives of the people who require it most, viz., marginalize communities experiencing the greatest poverty and vulnerability. Peace and security, the rule of law and democratic governance, gender equality and human rights are included in the framework as is the recognition that coherent approach would demand an integration of human rights, economic transformation, social justice and environmental stewardship without which the vision of poverty eradication and sustainable development will not be possible. Even in the brief development experience since the Rio Summit, the evidence unequivocally reminds us of the adverse consequences of the Mephistophelean wagering of short-term benefits against sustainability and good quality of life for all. As report of the High-Level Panel also underscores, it is "Only by mobilizing social, economic and environmental action together can we eradicate poverty and meet the aspirations of eight billion people by 2030"<sup>1</sup>.

### **2. JAMAICA'S PRIORITIES**

The United Nations truly values and supports the National Motto of Jamaica "Out of Many, One People" which forms the core of the Government's emphasis on achieving greater equality. It currently poses a significant challenge in the presence of an inadequate fiscal space and the imperative to fulfill conditionality of the Extended Fund Facility agreement with the IMF. The

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<sup>1</sup> A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development. The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Executive Summary.



emphasis on creating decent jobs by the Government and exploring creative opportunities to spur inclusive growth is therefore commendable. Renewing people's confidence in Government's ability to deliver basic goods, services and social protection to all citizens is indispensable; it is an integral component of good governance. Then again, global evidence from successful sustainable development models draws attention to making sure that such opportunities develop local resources, maintain their integrity and create positive externalities in line with national comparative advantages. Jamaica's natural wealth, coastal resources and biodiversity provide one such niche. They generate local livelihoods, promote tourism, engender opportunities for ecological tourism and mitigate the adverse impacts of natural disasters. The latter is critical for a small island developing state like Jamaica, especially with the latest findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate change (IPCC) in its fifth Assessment Report (AR5). The multiple lines of independent evidence conclude that the changes in the climate patterns are unprecedented. Business as usual will lead to more havoc through more frequent and longer lasting heat waves, greater droughts in the dry regions and more rainfall in the wet regions. This is the basis for the work of United Nations in the delicate ecosystems of Jamaica. It highlights safeguarding livelihoods while enhancing protective benefits of the biodiversity-laden and wetlands areas of Jamaica including protection of coastlines and infrastructure from the damaging impacts of storms and hurricanes and comprising, but not limited to the Portland Bight Protected Area (PBPA). This work is being accomplished through resources obtained from the Global Environment Facility, Climate Change Adaptation Fund, private sector banks and other Environmental funding sources including core resources of the UN Agencies.

### **3. Contributions of UN Agencies (Jamaica)**

While at least four agencies of the United Nations, viz., UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO and UN-FAO are working on these important issues and in the PBPA, the work has implications for additional agencies like ILO, UNICEF and WHO-PAHO, and other development partners who are committed to alleviating the adverse impacts of climate change, adaptation and resilience building and mitigating the impacts of natural disasters in Jamaica.

3.1 The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is partnering the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), the Forestry Department (Ministry of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change), the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT), The Nature Conservancy, the Protected Areas Committee, the Ministry of Finance and Planning, the Planning Institute of Jamaica and the German Development Bank (KfW) to implement a US\$7.8 million, six-year project to



strengthen operational and financial sustainability of national protected areas, including the PBPA by eliminating direct and indirect threats<sup>2</sup>. The long-term solution is a consolidated National Protected Areas System (NPAS). The creation of a Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF), established under the Caribbean Challenge Initiative will make principal and annual disbursement to NPAS to sustain them.

The second phase of the Caribbean Challenge Initiative (CCI) was launched at a Summit of Caribbean Political and Business Leaders during May 17-18, 2013 in the British Virgin Islands to accelerate marine conservation action in the Caribbean. While the Summit helped to galvanize US\$75 million in funding commitments to safeguard the marine and coastal environment, along with commitments to take new marine conservation actions and to put in place more sustainable business practices. Eight Caribbean governments including the Government of Jamaica signed a Leaders Declaration to effectively conserve and manage at least 20% (Jamaica took on 25%) of the marine and coastal environment by 2020 while agreeing to specific actions relating to marine protected areas, fisheries, tourism, climate change adaptation and marine pollution.

In addition to the Caribbean Challenge Initiative Declaration (2013), Jamaica has demonstrated strong commitment to protecting its biodiversity through the development of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NRCA 2003); the National Ecological Gap Assessment (NEGA) (Ecological Working Group 2009); the Protected Areas Policy (GOJ 1997); and the Protected Areas System Master Plan (under preparation).

- 3.2 The work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has led to Jamaica's active participation and engagement in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) with the PBPA validated as a Protected Area under the Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act (1999). In fact, Jamaica's Conservation of Biodiversity Action Plan includes setting aside Goat Islands as a wildlife sanctuary for endangered species. PBPA has also been declared in 2006 as a wetland of international importance - a Ramsar site under the Ramsar Convention.

Additionally, Goat Islands (1994), Amity Hall (1997) and Cabarita Point (1998) have all been declared as reserves under the Wildlife Protection Act. In 2010, Galleon Harbour,

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<sup>2</sup> The project directly supports Jamaica's 2012-2016 United Nations Development Action Framework's outcome 1 highlighting island-wide improved natural resource management and resilience to disasters through effective governance of natural resources by national, local authorities and most vulnerable communities.



Salt Harbour and Three Bays were declared as Special Fisheries Conservation Areas under the Fishing Industries Act. And, Birdlife International has proclaimed PBPA as an Important Bird Area (IBA).

Any development of these areas would be contrary to the objectives and principles of these regional and global treaties as well as the Cartagena Convention and its protocols. And, by threatening fragile ecosystem of the South Coast, it would impact food security and sustainable livelihoods of the local fisher folks by potentially collapsing the already decimating fisheries in the area, and erode/ deteriorate the quality of beaches at Hellshire and Fort Clarence while making the coastline vulnerable to hurricanes/storms and sea-surges.

- 3.3 The work of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations at the country level is important for enhancing nutrition, increasing agricultural productivity and raising the standard of living of rural populations while contributing to economic growth. FAO recently implemented a project (2012-2013) to strengthen community preparedness and resilience to natural disasters in selected vulnerable neighborhoods of Jamaica by enhancing agricultural livelihoods and food and nutrition security in rural communities and developing preparedness capacity and resilience of farmers and fisher folks to natural disasters. The project is being implemented in five rural agricultural and fisheries communities and comprises Old Harbour Bay. Comprehensive disaster management plans for Old Harbour Bay fishing community has been established drawing on a livelihood assessment. In addition, partnership with Caribbean Coastal Area Management Foundation (C-CAM) has been established by designating it as Centre for providing post disaster support. Additionally, the fisher folks have been provided with GPS units to enhance their abilities to locate and retrieve fishing gear and advise their locations in the event of being lost at sea.

Also the little Goat Island ( $\approx 3 \text{ Km}^2$ ) joins the large Goat Island through mangroves and jointly constitutes about 1500 acres. There is enough global evidence that coastal belts of mangroves contribute to resilience by reducing the impacts of severe storms and hurricanes. The coastal ecosystem provides an essential habitat for a large number of animal species, especially several commercially important fish species. The Goat Islands have a school of dolphins that accompany the visitors and the fisher folks.



- 3.4 The PBPA has recently (May 2013) received conditional approval as a Biosphere Reserve of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This required intensive efforts by the Government of Jamaica to successfully prepare a comprehensive dossier for submission to the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Intergovernmental Committee of UNESCO. It is praiseworthy for the Government to have undertaken the initiative. And it obligates the Government to ensure that all subsequent development pathways qualify an integrity test, viz., that they do not undermine decades of investment by the government and donors on the conservation and sustainable management of the coastal and marine resources of the South Coast of Jamaica. If the process is managed proficiently and with principles of sustainability, a Biosphere Reserve will not only enhance Jamaica's profile as a center of ecological tourism but also offer replicable models to other small island developing states whose economic revenues are contingent on tourism. With the entire Caribbean region vying for the same tourists, such a unique niche will advance Jamaica's tourism potential.
- 3.5 The Planning Institute of Jamaica has received nearly US\$10 million from the Adaptation Fund to enhance resilience of Agricultural sector and coastal areas to protect livelihoods and improve food security. While the project initially focuses on the Negril Coastline, it plans to carry out agricultural adaptation activities in northern Manchester and in the parishes of Clarendon, Trelawny, St. Mary, St. Thomas, St. Ann and St. Catherine. As Jamaica is amongst the very few champion countries that have a Ministry of climate change, it presents a greater likelihood for it to attract resources to develop adaptive capacity and create livelihoods along other coastlines from existing and emerging climate change funds.

#### **4. UNITED NATIONS' OFFER**

The UN reiterates its firm commitment to support the Government of Jamaica in the implementation of its Medium Term Policy Economic Framework (2012-2015) towards the achievement of long-term goals. The severe socio-economic challenges faced by the Government also present it an opportunity to undertake initiatives that while meeting the demand for jobs and economic growth would advance inclusive and sustainable development.

It is important for the Government to have all available and relevant information relating to the costs and benefits – both tangible and intangible of a decision prior to making its choice. Also,



constructive participation of vital stakeholders has been found to enhance the quality and ownership of the decision.

Counting on neutrality of the United Nations and its reputation as an 'honest broker', UNCT stands ready to provide the following assistance:

- Provide assistance for top-notch experts who can assist in the technical and economic evaluation of various sustainable development possibilities. This would include expertise from various relevant sectors including creation of decent jobs while also fulfilling national obligations towards global Conventions and agreements.
- Organize town-hall meetings with all relevant stakeholders as guided by the Government. We could also facilitate the participation of experts at such fora.
- Work with the firm Conrad Douglas & Associates that has been selected to conduct an initial environmental integrity and feasibility study including through the engagement of UN experts.