

**Opening remarks by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade during the
International Seabed Authority Sensitization Seminar,
ISA Headquarters, 28-30 March 2011**

His Excellency Mr. Nii Oduntun, Secretary General of the International Seabed Authority;

His Excellency Satya Nandan, former Secretary General of the International Seabed Authority;

Judge Dolliver Nelson, former President of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea;

Dr. Jin Jiancai, Secretary General, COMRA;

Justice Charles Anderson, Caribbean Court of Justice;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps;

Other Distinguished Guests,

Good morning.

I welcome you to Jamaica especially those who may be visiting for the first time. I hope that you will take the opportunity to enjoy the many delights that Jamaica has to offer.

I wish to thank the International Seabed Authority (ISA), in particular its Secretary General, for arranging to convene this sensitization seminar in Jamaica and for inviting me to offer brief opening remarks. As Host Country of the ISA, Jamaica is pleased to have collaborated with the Authority and the University of the West Indies in staging this event.

I am advised that this is the first time that such a sensitization seminar is being held for the Caribbean region. This follows on similar seminars which have been held in Indonesia, Brazil, Nigeria and Spain. We welcome this timely initiative which will focus on the challenges facing Caribbean countries as well as explore areas for collaboration in order to derive some of the benefits from the prospecting, exploration and exploitation of deep seabed mineral resources. We are encouraged by the progress made by the Authority in its previous sessions, including in the last session, which has established the framework for such activities in the Area.

As we move towards the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea which took place in Montego Bay in 1982, it is important that the work of the ISA be given increased global and regional prominence, as its work continues to be the core component of the international legal regime which regulates the use of the oceans.

In this context, this seminar should foster and reinforce interest and understanding of the work of the Authority. I am sure it will also underscore the continued relevance of the Convention in providing the basis for protecting and conducting activities in relation to the common heritage of mankind. Hopefully, this sensitisation activity will also encourage greater participation in the Convention and subsequently the Authority.

All of us should by now be seized by the compelling reality of Climate Change and Global Warming. The Doubting Thomases have been silenced and must by now be impressed with the global display of displeasure by a restless Earth who knows that something is going dreadfully wrong, and at an accelerating pace.

When we contemplate the deficit of development on continental and small island states, when compared to more the developed states, in addition to the demand on natural resources of our world to fill that gap, especially for water and energy, we know we cannot go forward without good governance, equity and social justice.

Recent events highlight these concerns. They are: the confrontation between fishing boats and coastal guards between Jamaica/Honduras, Jamaica /Nicaragua and Honduras/Nicaragua; the Gulf of Mexico 200 Million gallons oil spill, which followed the explosion of a deep sea exploration rig, and which caused the death of 11 employees. Other events include the: earthquake, tsunami and nuclear reactor crisis, which currently unfolds in Japan, affecting the world's third largest economy, following New Zealand, Haiti and other countries, and extreme climate conditions such as weather coral bleaching in the Caribbean.

All these call for the recognition and respect for geopolitical territories, and the collective action of these countries in the fight to mitigate these destructive effects on earth, and to protect our natural resources.

As the international community progresses towards the equitable management of the resources of the world's oceans and the deep seabed, we have seen that improved technology coupled with increased demand has led to price increases for some of the traditional metals which can be obtained from seabed minerals, including nickel and cobalt.

We have a particular interest in the potential uses for rare earth elements and other trace elements to be found in sea floor deposits as the technologies utilised by rare earth elements are beneficial to renewable

energy and carbon dioxide emission reductions in the mitigation of the impact of climate change.

The international community is trying to recover from the various challenges which have constrained or even reversed the development of many countries. As part of this process, it is critical that there be a fuller understanding as to how the resources of the deep seabed can assist in development. This will need, however, to be an inclusive, non-discriminatory process, guaranteeing access to all, and be one in which countries in the Caribbean region are fully engaged.

One of the main characteristics of the Convention is its emphasis on the protection of the marine environment from harmful effects and on natural resource conservation. As is known, the sea represents the lifeline for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), many of which are to be found in the Caribbean. Attention will have to be paid to the protection and the preservation of the marine environment even as we conduct prospecting, exploration and mining activities in this area.

Just last week, the Jamaican Parliament adopted a Charter of Rights which amends Chapter 3 of the Jamaican Constitution. One of the significant provisions of the Charter is the inclusion of the right of all Jamaicans to enjoy access to a healthy environment. The ability to enjoy the marine environment will constitute an extension of this right. We are therefore compelled constitutionally to protect the oceans on which we so depend.

We believe that it is critical that international attention be paid to the examination of conservation methods for marine resources. This could be a

topic for discussion at the Rio plus 20 conference scheduled to be held in June 2012 in Brazil.

At the same time, we could examine how existing arrangements and agreements under the UNCLOS could be considered as the basis for such action as we urgently need the protection and conservation of marine biodiversity. Some issues for consideration could include the sharing and management of marine reserves and an examination of the benefits to be derived from the diversity of marine resources. This would complement the benefits to be gained from deep sea-bed mining. There is also the opportunity for improved cooperation and coordination among international organisations charged with overseeing activities in the oceans in order to ensure consistency and better protection of the marine environment.

Ladies and gentlemen, the rich exchange of knowledge, information and ideas which should result from this seminar will only redound to the benefit of all countries in the Region. We would therefore urge the Authority, to the extent possible, to organize similar sensitization events, including those for students in the Caribbean region. The participation of the University of the West Indies in this event provides a basis for such activity. I invite Secretary General Oduntun to consider how best he can utilize the unique opportunities represented by the location of the ISA here in Jamaica in continuing such public outreach and awareness.

We look forward to one of the main outcomes of this meeting being the increased collaboration among Caribbean States on marine issues including scientific research and capacity building. We need to build on the natural linkages among Caribbean States and this seminar affords us the opportunity to do so.

I thank Secretary-General Oduntun once again for undertaking this timely initiative and convey my best wishes for a fruitful and productive event. After your deliberations for the next three days, I am confident that the foundation for enhanced engagement among countries in the region in matters related to the deep seabed as joint custodians of the Caribbean Sea, will be laid. As host of the International Seabed Authority, you can count on Jamaica to play its part.

Thank you.