

**REMARKS OF THE HON. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES,  
DR. CHRISTOPHER TUFTON AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY  
OF THE 5<sup>TH</sup> MINISTERIAL MEETING OF  
“AGRICULTURE AND RURAL LIFE IN THE AMERICAS”**

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Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Hon. Dr. Ken Baugh, Director General of the Inter-American Institute on Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Dr. Chelston Brathwaite, Distinguished Colleague Ministers and Heads of Delegation, representatives of Regional and International Organizations, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It has been for me and my team a distinct pleasure to host you here in Jamaica over the last few days, in this Hemispheric Week of Agriculture. It has been a very intense week, but none-the-less rewarding.

The week began with GRICA meeting, where Ministerial Delegates over a day and a half negotiated a new Agreement that I am happy we were able to adopt today, as the new Hemispheric Agenda 2010 – 2011, that will now be dubbed “The Ministerial Agreement Jamaica 2009”. I must pause to thank and congratulate our hard

working ministerial delegates, led by our own non-Ministerial delegate from Jamaica, Permanent Secretary Donovan Stanberry, who worked tirelessly to achieve consensus on some sixteen (16) strategic actions.

Ladies and Gentlemen, speaker after speaker highlighted the critical imperative of redefining and repositioning the agricultural sector as a key driver of economic growth and rural development and prosperity. The presentations on the regional perspective on the food security situations in our sub-regions were revealing, sobering and stark. It is clear that the imperative of boosting agricultural production and productivity is urgent, and the thrust must be sustained.

The Ministerial Agreement Jamaica 2009 highlights the critical and strategic notions that we must pursue at the national and hemispheric levels in order to drive the sustainable development of the agricultural sector. Over the next two (2) years this Agreement commits us to ramp up the production of food, diversify our food basket, through the development of traditional foods of cultural

significance. It also speaks to building capacity and infrastructure in food health and safety, soils and water management, food storage and processing, risk management and value chain development. Importantly, the Agreement also commits us to create programmes that facilitate greater access by our farmers to lands and improve land titling, as this is a critical constraint to access credit.

As individual countries, we must now take this Hemispheric Agenda 2010-2011, and within our budgets make provisions for the implementation of the strategic actions. In this thrust individual countries will require significant support. In this regard, we are happy to have had a number of our regional and international development partners around the table. We were heartened to hear of the commitment of Canada and the United States, two (2) members of the G-8, in our group. We are challenging the IICA to in a concrete way sit with our development partners and iron out specific mechanisms and programmes to match the resources of our critical bilateral and multilateral partners to funding the implementation of our Agro Plan 2005-2015.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are also acutely conscious that the implementation of the Ministerial Agreement Jamaica 2009 cannot be executed by the public sector alone. Indeed, while Governments create the enabling environment, it is private players along with the entire value chain that must work in concert with the Government for the implementation of this Plan. In this regard, we in Jamaica are happy to have been able to organize along with CARICOM and IICA, a parallel private sector dialogue, where the private sector outlined the concerns and issues that policy makers must address, in order to stimulate greater investments in agriculture. These issues were presented by Mr. Earl Jarrett of Jamaica, a private sector leader, to the Ministerial Meeting. It is my belief that these concerns were by and large addressed in the Ministerial Agreement, and the Agreement itself commits IICA to support the participation of the private sector in future Ministerial Meetings.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the adoption of the Ministerial Agreement marks an important beginning. We must however be aware, that this is in fact the easiest step, implementation is the greater challenge. Implementation will only be effective if there is in the

first instance the political will, and the commitment of resources and an effective monitoring and reporting mechanism. The record number of Ministers (22) present here at this Ministerial meeting is a huge statement of political will. In terms of resources, we urge each country to lobby their respective Cabinets to accord priority to our Agriculture Ministries in the allocation of national budgets. Again, I challenge IICA to continue the engagement of our bilateral and international partners to support the implementation of our Agreement. The Ministerial Agreement has given IICA a special responsibility to provide support to strengthen and monitor the implementation of the Agro Plan in member states and to facilitate the exchange of experiences in the implementation process.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the final Ministerial Meeting for Dr. Braithwaite in his capacity of Director General of this noble institution. There is no doubt that he has moved the Institute to a higher level during his tenure. He has been a passionate and persistent advocate for a new Agriculture. As I close, I wish to on your behalf, thank Chelston for his leadership over the past eight (8) years.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it has been a fruitful Ministerial meeting. The presentations were first class, the dialogue among Ministers rich, but I want Jamaica 2009 to be remembered for bold and concrete actions to advance Agriculture and rural life in the hemisphere and in providing a new impetus to focused and effective implementation.

Thank you.