

**Closing remarks of the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of
Jamaica, Dr. Kenneth Baugh**

Honourable Christopher Tufton, chairman, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries of Jamaica; Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture of Jamaica, Mr. Stanberry; Dr. The Honourable Chelston Brathwaite, Director General of the Inter-American Institute of Cooperation on Agriculture; honourable Ministers and Secretaries of Agriculture of the Americas, representatives of the diplomatic corps here present, representatives of international and regional organizations, distinguished delegates, representatives from the private sector and representatives of the Media.

I feel very privileged and honoured to join you this morning at the closing of this Fifth Hemispheric Meeting, particularly because of your appropriate theme, "Agriculture and rural life in the Americas". I congratulate you on the successful completion of your deliberations, following nearly two days of intense discussions, which will culminate in the adoption of the Hemispheric Ministerial Agreement Jamaica 2009.

I trust that you have all enjoyed your stay in Jamaica, and that you enjoyed our traditional hospitality. We would love to welcome you back in the future for business or for pleasure.

The positive outcome of this meeting bolsters the work for the AGRO Plan 2003-2015, the product of four previous ministerial meetings, and continuous to chart the course for agriculture and rural development and, indeed, for overall sustainable development in the hemisphere.

As we all well know, the recent economic crisis and the ecological crisis affecting the world are superimposed, in our case, on a long standing crisis and serious debt problems as well as external shocks.

The challenge to the world and to us is to form partnerships between the developed and developing world and to focus on the building of capacities in the developing countries, but particularly with emphasis, as you all agree, on sustainable agriculture emphasizing not the only profits for the investor, but social conditions and the environment. In other words, people, planet and profit as well.

The continued primacy of agriculture and concomitant rural development on the hemispheric agenda has been reinforced and fulfills the mandate given by the Fifth Summit of the Americas, which met in Trinidad and Tobago in April of this year. That mandate instructed the Ministers of Agriculture of hemisphere to develop activities on food security to allow for access and availability of food, including through the promotion of investment and the building of institutional capacities in order to increase and intensify productive activities in agriculture.

Jamaica, as host of this auspicious conference, can therefore be justifiably proud of the role it has played in assisting in the fulfillment of the mandates provided by the Summit and strengthening agriculture development in the Americas. We thank you all for this privilege.

I wish at this juncture to commend my colleague Dr. Christopher Tufton, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, and his hard working team for undertaking the arrangements for the successful staging of this meeting which has further advanced practical cooperation and action in agriculture and food security, which will rebound in the improvement of the quality of life of the farmers and the peoples of the Americas. In Jamaica, he and his team are highly regarded for the work that they are doing, but also for the burdensome challenge with high expectations in Jamaica for agriculture to be at the center of our economic recovery and development. They are moving expeditiously to fulfill those expectations.

Jamaica is fully committed to strengthening Inter-American cooperation and collaboration. We are all challenged to assert ourselves in the world market place. Next week, here in Montego Bay, Foreign Ministers from Latin America and the Caribbean will be participating in the Ministerial Meeting of Latin America and the Caribbean on Integration and Development - the acronym is CALC after the Spanish words - and also participating in the 28th ministerial meeting of the Rio Group now being chaired by Mexico.

The CALC meeting, in particular, will seek to examine ways in which Latin America and the Caribbean can practically strengthen their collaboration in tackling the various challenges facing the region. Among the issues to be discussed will be those of hunger and poverty and the ways in which cooperative and practical steps can be taken by Latin American and Caribbean countries to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by the target date of 2015, in fulfillment of goal No. 1 of the Millennium Development Goals. Our collective determination is to diminish or eventually remove barriers to trade with tariff or non tariff technical barriers, creating an enormous market place at sub regional, regional and possibly, eventually, hemispheric level in which there is an ever increasing free movement of capital, goods, services and people, in which there is cooperation in science and technology and the products of research in building efficiencies and productive capabilities in our countries, creating jobs and products for export, as well as creating a better life for all farmers and for all people in general.

At the sub regional level CARICOM Member States have been working on the implementation of the JAGDEO initiative, named after President Bharrat Judgeo of Guyana, which provides a blueprint for repositioning agriculture within the region. Access to, availability of, and the quality of food continue to engage the attention of the international community. Some of the issues being faced are, on one hand, the obvious need to reduce the numbers of persons currently suffering from hunger, disturbingly estimated by the Food and Agriculture Organization to be in the region of 850 million to one billion persons and, on the other hand, the ongoing debate on genetically modified foods.

For developing countries in particular the right to food has been considered an essential human right. Thankfully, there is growing international consensus on this. It is also instructive that the economic, environmental and energy challenges of these times, have all highlighted the importance of continued access to food and sound agricultural practices in protecting the world's most vulnerable and in promoting the international development agenda.

The on-going deliberations in the World Trade Organization, as well as discussions for a successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol when it expires in 2012, to be determined at the meeting of the 15th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will take place in Copenhagen in December of this year, also impact on agricultural development.

In this connection, given the inextricable link of agriculture and economic development, it is necessary for international policy makers to seek to mainstream agriculture into their deliberations. Increased attention to agriculture at the international level has followed on the comprehensive framework for action agreed by the United Nations high level taskforce on the global food security crisis, which was established last year by the United Nation Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. The deliberations of the Economic and Social Council were the venue, and the summits convened by the FAO and other international organizations, which all provide the basis for finding solutions to achieve food security. The common objective of all these processes is for the international community to undertake collaborative and coordinated action in dealing with the issue.

It is therefore heartening that the G8 Summit this year in L'Aquila, Italy made tangible commitments towards agriculture development by agreeing to mobilize 20 billion dollars over the next three years for a comprehensive strategy for sustainable global food security and for advancing, by the end of 2009, the implementation of a global partnership for agriculture and food security.

These commitments were reinforced at the G20 Meeting in Pittsburgh in September, which also called on the World Bank to work with interested donors and organizations to develop a multilateral trust fund to scale-up agricultural assistance to low income countries, in order to support innovative bilateral and multilateral efforts to improve global nutrition and build sustainable agricultural systems. In this regard, there is a roll for the hemispheric and regional development banks to undertake similar efforts which I believe have been addressed by this meeting.

In the quest for the new green revolution in the Twenty First Century it is to be hoped that there will be urgent translation of financial commitments into hard cash payments. At the same time, the provision of increased and additional resources has highlighted the value of investment in agriculture in the developing world, primarily in areas of capacity strengthening, appropriate technology transfer, and facilitation of the flow of capital, of knowledge, and of skills. Investment also moves agriculture beyond primary production into more value added enterprises.

UNCTAD in its recent World Investment Report for this year has highlighted the role that investment plays in agriculture. Interestingly, there has been an increase in South-South investment in agriculture, which has become more evident since the onset of the food crisis, as part of a strategic policy decision on the part of some countries to attain food security. Countries in the Hemisphere should seek to encourage and develop the conducts to facilitate such investment.

I commend this meeting for its initiative, in this connection, in soliciting and taking on board the views of the private sector. I am so pleased to hear of the emphasis being put on it by the Chairman and the meeting, which contributed to its dialogue on building capacity for enhancing food security and rural life.

Distinguish Ministers and Secretaries of State, ladies and gentlemen, the course has been set for you, by you, and you have charted the way towards achieving our hemispheric objectives. As Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade I will play my part in keeping with the underlining concept of the Ministerial Process in ensuring that the outcomes of this meeting adequately inform Jamaica's foreign policies. Throughout your journey you have been ably assisted by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture which has helped immeasurably in translating this vision into reality. In this regard I must pay tribute to the outgoing Director General of IICA, Dr. Chelston Brathwaite.

Dr. Brathwaite has been present since the beginning of the Ministerial Process on agriculture and is leaving behind a sterling legacy and a strong Institute. We are proud that this son of the Caribbean soil has represented this region so well. Dr. Brathwaite's dedication, commitment, and visualization in relation to agriculture cannot be overstated. One cannot help but speak with him to catch the spirit which he introduces into agriculture and into rural development.

We are pleased with the support provided by him through the Institute towards national development and wish him all the best in his future endeavours. He can be assured of the continued commitment and support of Jamaica to his successor and to the work of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture.

I thank you very much for your attention.