



IN THE SENATE

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE KAMINA JOHNSON SMITH, JP  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE AND  
LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ON

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE AND COLLABORATION FOLLOWING  
THE PASSAGE OF HURRICANE MELISSA

ON

19<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2025

Mr. President,

As today is the last sitting before the Christmas recess, I am sure we will all agree that it would be entirely in order that we end on a note of gratitude. As Members are aware, Jamaica's response to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Melissa has been supplemented and amplified by the solidarity and support of our international friends and partners. Today, I would like to not only place our gratitude – already expressed elsewhere – on Hansard, but to elaborate on the extent of their generosity of spirit and support.

Observation of Silence

Mr. President,

I begin by acknowledging all the expressions of deep sympathies that have been conveyed to the Government and people of Jamaica in the wake of Hurricane Melissa. We express our deepest sympathies to the families of the 45 persons whose lives were lost and those who are still missing. We also express our solidarity and hope for comfort to the thousands of Jamaicans in the parishes most severely affected, who have lost their homes, possessions, livelihoods.

Even as we address these circumstances in Jamaica, I would like to invite the attention of the nation to the plight of our friends in the international community who have also suffered loss as a result of tropical cyclones in 2025.

We recall that profound loss has been felt in other Caribbean nations due to the passage of Hurricane Melissa. To the Governments and peoples of Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, we express our sympathies.

Much further afield, just three days ago our dear friends in Morocco lost 37 lives and significant damage due to flash flooding. We express our sympathies to them even as we extend our sympathies to the governments and peoples of South Africa and Mozambique who themselves also experienced losses of life and property yet again as a result of flooding. The unusual cyclones in Brazil and Darwin, Australia caught many by surprise. And so, we turn to the people of the Asian Pacific, who have faced a very challenging season. Across Asia, over 1,750 lives were lost and millions displaced, due to intense overlapping storms as well as intensified monsoon systems. In Indonesia, severe floods and landslides have resulted in more than 860 deaths. In Sri Lanka, there are 212 deaths reported and 218 people missing. In Thailand, at least 178 fatalities were reported. In Viet Nam, nearly 100 people are reported to have lost their lives. In the Philippines, which is hit by an average of 20 systems each year, at least 220 lives were lost.

In India, over 1,500 lives were lost in extreme monsoon weather events, due to a sharp increase in heavy rain and flood events and including unusually early heatwaves.

We also take note of cyclone activity where the loss of life was thankfully much less. In Japan, where Typhoons Halong and Nakri landed a week apart, and in China, where millions were

evacuated ahead of Super Typhoon Ragasa – the strongest of the season, no lives were lost to that system on the mainland. However, even in these circumstances, infrastructural damage was still quite significant.

We also extend our sympathies to the governments and families who have lost loved ones in the Eastern Pacific – Canada, the United States and Mexico which have all experienced difficult weather events.

Mr. President,

With your leave, may I invite the Members to join me in observing a moment/minute of silence for all those who have suffered loss as a result of the effects of tropical cyclones this year.

Landfall of Hurricane Melissa

Mr. President,

I will now address the matter of Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica, with particular regard to international collaboration and goodwill.

On October 28, 2025, Hurricane Melissa, one of the strongest Atlantic storms ever, and the first Category 5 hurricane in recorded history to hit Jamaica directly, made landfall. Widespread and severe damage was inflicted on the parishes of St. Elizabeth, Westmoreland, Hanover, St. James, Trelawny, St. Ann and Manchester.

Though the damage was immense, there is no doubt that our proactive measures ensured Jamaica faced Hurricane Melissa in the greatest possible state of readiness to safeguard our people and enable a rapid transition into relief and recovery.

Once it was safe to do so, the Government moved quickly to the search and rescue phase and to get relief to affected communities with urgency and unity of purpose, to protect life and to preserve order. I would like to commend the several private sector companies, individuals and groups, including faith-based organisations, which immediately mobilised aid for the affected communities. This complemented the Government's efforts through the various Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

The Role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

In one of Jamaica's most challenging periods, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade has had the honour of serving as a lynchpin by coordinating and managing one of the most critical components of Jamaica's post-Melissa response – the tremendous support from the international community, including our Diaspora. All our Missions are serving as focal points for the sharing of information and coordination of efforts overseas, and Ambassador Anderson in Washington, DC has the lead role of coordinating as between them when needed.

In the lead up to and since the event, countless governments have reached out to offer their solidarity and, in many cases, tangible support.

Notable among the immediate response was the in-kind assistance from the international community, which has included heavy equipment for removal of debris, helicopters, generators and drones, field hospitals, food, water purifiers, solar batteries, medical supplies, tarpaulins, bedding, personal hygiene kits and others identified by ODPEM's Standard and Heavy Duty Needs List. I must commend the level of care and sensitivity taken to the appropriateness of the donations, relevant to the circumstances we are experiencing.

#### Bilateral Assistance

Mr. President,

Let me turn to the Bilateral Donations which we gratefully received. I would like to express our gratitude once again for the donations and ready support we have received from our bilateral partners, grouped by region:

##### CARICOM and the Caribbean

The Bahamas; Barbados, Belize; Bermuda; the Cayman Islands; the Dominican Republic; Guyana; St. Lucia; Trinidad and Tobago;

##### Latin America

Brazil; Chile; Colombia; El Salvador; Peru and Venezuela.

##### North America

Canada; and the United States of America.

##### Europe

The European Union [CPM]; Belgium; France; Germany; Luxembourg; Netherlands; Spain; and the United Kingdom.

##### Asia:

China; India; Japan; and Korea

##### Africa

Ethiopia; Ghana; and Rwanda; and in

##### Other Regions

Israel; and New Zealand.

In addition to the much-appreciated relief items, please allow me to highlight some of the teams which provided critical support:

- Disaster Assistance Relief Teams (DART) from the USA and Canada and Canada's Operational Support Hub (OSH);
- Over 300 personnel equipped with expertise in emergency assistance, including for medical care, search & rescue and recovery from El Salvador;
- a field hospital staffed with 76 x 2 medical personnel from Spain;
- a field hospital and over 60 medical personnel from Barbados – we appreciate the funding being provided by the UK's FCDO in this regard;
- Electricity line workers from Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Canada, the Cayman Islands, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States;
- Medical teams from India, Israel and various states of the USA;
- a medical ship from China – with its 300bed hospital, extensive medical personnel and state of the art equipment; and
- Military personnel from Barbados, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Ghana, Guyana [and Rwanda to come], conducting roofing repair missions, as well as an assessment team from Ethiopia.

Mr. President,

It is of great significance to Jamaica that our friends and partners extend this type of solidarity, despite their own challenges – and we really appreciate the triangular partnerships that have put willingness and human capacity together with air transport and financial means which have translated to teams on the ground here. I would like our friends and partners to know that the Government of Jamaica does not take them for granted, in no way feels entitled to the support that we receive, and is deeply thankful for all that we receive.

Multilateral Support

Mr. President,

Technical support from the regional and international organizations, especially those with offices in Kingston, was immediate and targeted. We are grateful to the United Nations (UN) and its agencies which have pivoted in their programming to respond to the needs, in particular the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organisation WHO/PAHO.

In partnership with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, PAHO and UNICEF continue to support mobile clinics, mobile pharmacy services, mental health and psychosocial support, and the distribution of WASH kits and medical supplies to shelters and communities.

The United Nations Secretary-General deployed a mission from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to Jamaica led by an Under-Secretary-General. Technical support has been

committed to the ODPEM and a subsequent briefing was held with UN Member States on the impact of Hurricane Melissa on Caribbean countries.

We are also grateful to the Organization of American States (OAS); the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA); the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism and their International Partnerships mechanisms; and the International Federation of the Red Cross, among others, which have rallied to our cause.

At the intergovernmental level, the membership of several international organizations has taken action to adopt decisions or resolutions which demonstrate their support for Jamaica and request Member States to provide assistance. Of note, the OAS adopted a resolution calling on its membership to provide support to the countries in the region which have been impacted; and the Inter-American Board of Agriculture also adopted a resolution expressing solidarity with countries in the region affected by the Hurricane, requesting its membership to provide support and authorizing IICA to cooperate with the affected countries to provide technical cooperation assistance.

#### Diaspora Support

Mr. President,

I am pleased to report that there has been an outpouring of support from the Jamaican Diaspora and from friends of Jamaica all over the world.

Working alongside The Honourable Alando Terrelonge, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, the Embassy of Jamaica in Washington, D.C. has been tasked to coordinate overseas international donation efforts. This oversight includes information sharing, outreach and guidance on the drop-off points established across the respective countries by all our Missions, particularly in the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom. Members will note that support has indeed come from members of our Diaspora as far away as Australia.

In particular, I would like to thank:

- o Mr. Oliver Mair, Jamaica's Consul-General in Miami;
- o The late Alston Wilson and the team at the Consulate General at New York; o Mr. Nathaniel Peat, the Global Jamaica Diaspora Council's UK South Representative; o Dr. Stephanie Fletcher-Lartey, the Global Jamaica Diaspora Council's Representative for Asia & the Pacific; o Mr. Glenroy McIntosh, the Global Jamaica Diaspora Council's Caribbean Representative; o Dr. Yanique Gray-Chung, Ms. Deon Nicely-Simpson and other Jamaicans in Guyana; o The Jamaican Diaspora across the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV); o Northeast USA GJDC; o The Angel Foundation in the UK; o Jamaican Diaspora organizations in Australia; o Jamaicans in London Ontario Association; o Jamaica Strong Radiothon and the Jamaica Strong Concert; o Jamrock Charity; o Ignite Jamaica Fund; o Jamaican Canadian Association; o Dr. B. Roy Davidson; o Dr. Laxley Stephenson; o Dr.

Beverly Nichols; o Wes Hall & Donnette Chin-Loy Chang; o Throp & Travellers Beach Resort; o The Samuel & Eugenie Brown Foundation; o Steve Higgins & Brick and Lace;

- o Jamaica Basic School Foundation;
- o JN Bank UK; o Southwest Airlines; o The Montgomery County Council;
- o City of Toronto; o City of Brampton; o Durham Regional Municipality (Health Department); o Halton Regional Municipality (Health Department); o The Sheffield & District African Caribbean Community Association o Caribbean Canadian Association of Waterloo Region (CCAWR),
- o Ontario Black Contractors Association (OBCA) and Black Planners and Urbanists Association (BPUA) o Fantasy Wings & British Airways Community Fund; o Opportunity Access Inc.;
- o Melbourne Motivation; o The Hummingbirds, Bahamas;
- o One Step Forward Consultancy and OSF International Social Care Services in collaboration with the Trafficking in Persons Secretariat, Ministry of National Security;
- o Howard University;
- o Missions Donation Drive (USA) through Silver Spring Civic Centre; Jerk Pit; Cube Root; Baltimore Central Church of God; St. Albans Anglican Catholic Church; East Road Beverages; and Montgomery College, German Town; o

The Trinidad and Tobago MA and other American Friends of Jamaica (AFJ) Disaster Relief Funds;

- o Large Up Agency & Brooklyn Bowl; o Jamaica Diaspora Mentorship Academy; o Organization for Economic Development & Diplomacy, Windsor, ON; o Toronto Community Benefits Network; o Donacrysta Inc / Norsteel Building;
- o Zendara Consulting; o EBS Global; o JCG Toronto; o Atlas Shipping Ltd; o Seafreight Canada; and o Grace Foods, Canada.

Mr. President,

The nature of the support is wide ranging, including items on the ODPEM's needs list such as relief and rebuilding items for homes, schools and other infrastructure. Donations have also been remitted to ODPEM. Pledges have also been made for educational and other continued support.

Jamaican creativity has been on overdrive as members of the Diaspora find ways to support. Resources have been raised through fundraisers such as concerts, dinners and other events and diaspora members have offered their business spaces as drop off centres. Airlines and shipping companies have provided transportation and even vacation rental properties have been offered for temporary housing.

Once again, I thank every friend of Jamaica and I thank every Jamaican – individually and through your associations, who continue to demonstrate interest and care for your families, your loved ones and your country. We could not do this without you!

## Support from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Not to be outdone are the NGOs. We are very grateful to the many NGOs that are actively operating on the ground or have provided donations. The ODPEM database has on record well over 100 external NGOs operating in the relief landscape, many with a long history of expertise in disaster response and management. Among the most notable are Global Empowerment Missions (GEM); the US-based World Central Kitchen (among the first to arrive in the country), working with local restaurants to provide meals; Doctors without Borders; and Direct Relief which has been working through the Ministry of Health and Wellness in the provision of medical items. Samaritans Purse has provided a Field Hospital, and is anticipated to provide another.

Private sector organisations in Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana have collaborated with their respective governments to provide relief supplies to Jamaica. This is a testament to the strong business and trade relationships that have been cultivated within CARICOM.

## Climate Advocacy and Building Resilience

As Melissa has demonstrated, even the strong fiscal resilience measures implemented by the government implemented are outweighed by the increasing frequency and strength of the storms with which we now contend. We are in a much better place than we would have been without them, but financial measures cannot be seen as a panacea – the work on adaptation, mitigation and reduction of GHGs must also continue at a global level if SIDS are to have a chance at sustainable growth.

Most recently, Prime Minister Holness, in addressing the G20 Leaders' Summit in Johannesburg, was able to underscore the importance of climate finance to vulnerable countries at the level and scale required to support our resilience and adaptation to climate-induced natural disasters, such as Hurricane Melissa. Importantly, he made the very clear assertion that resilience is not geopolitical or ideological – it is a pragmatic tool to address the damage to economies caused by exogenous factors like weather events. We look forward to building this thinking out with bilateral partners and in the multilateral space. We are of the view that resilience is absolutely critical and we are insistent that Jamaica should provide an example to the world of resilient recovery.

Jamaica will continue to use its engagements at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels to advocate for a framework to advocate for climate action. Jamaica continues to urge the international community to take tangible actions to meet the goal of 1.5°C; to provide climate finance at the level and scale required for the most vulnerable countries, including for loss and damage; and for the special circumstances of SIDS to be formally recognized and operationalized across all climate processes.

Jamaica's experience further testifies to the inescapable reality that is the need for urgent global action.

## Conclusion

Mr. President,

As 2025 ends, we reflect on a year that has been very active on the diplomatic front. We will look back at these early in the new year.

I will simply close as I started, on a note of gratitude. In times of crisis, no country can stand alone. We are thankful to our international friends and partners, for their commitment, compassion, and willingness to stand with us. Their support has not only assisted in the relief effort but will continue to be critical to the rebuilding of infrastructure and restoration of essential services. Each gesture of support reflects the strength of our shared friendships and the enduring value of bilateral, regional and international cooperation. They also reaffirm our confidence in the power of unity and collective action.

I reiterate our deepest gratitude to all our partners including our particularly special Diaspora family – working with us to bring hope, comfort, and life-saving assistance to our people. Their spirit of solidarity has given renewed meaning to diplomacy, restoring faith in humanity and inspiring Jamaica to press forward with confidence toward a brighter, stronger, and more prosperous and resilient future.

Finally, I thank my Foreign Ministry team – each and every one of them who has given their very best in hard work and dedication – their support makes these positive outcomes possible in conjunction with our colleague Ministries.

Mr. President,

Senators will agree that the year has also been unforgettable in several respects. We will continue to leverage our resilience as a people in collaboration with the support of our friends and partners in the international community to build back better, stronger and more resilient, Jamaica land we love, and we give thanks for our continued blessings as even though hardships there are, the land is green and the sun shineth.

Thank you, Mr. President.

(PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)