Address:
HMOS Brown – Regional Seminar BBNJ
20 May 2014

Salutations:
Excellencies
Distinguished guests
Ladies & gentlemen

I have the pleasure on behalf of the Government of Jamaica, to welcome you to this first regional workshop on the sustainable use and conservation of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction (BBNJ). I also wish to warmly welcome the organisers and participants who have journeyed to Jamaica for this important event. It is my hope that in the coming years many such opportunities for enhancing our knowledge and capacity to effectively engage the international community on this and other matters of significance will be afforded to us.

I also wish to thank the Pew Charitable Trusts and the High Seas Alliance for partnering with Jamaica in organising this workshop for CARICOM States.

Given Jamaica's long and distinguished engagement in matters relating to the law of the sea, I hope you will understand my saying that I believe that a more appropriate venue could not have been found for this first workshop, than right here, in the host country and city of the International Seabed Authority.

Ladies and gentlemen:
We have grown accustomed to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) providing guidance and a solid framework for our interaction with the marine environment. We have witnessed the global acceptance of this piece of

seminal legislation and have come to appreciate the work done by visionaries of the not too distant past, who believed that the resources of the sea, one of our last global frontiers, are the common heritage of all mankind and that its vast wealth should be equitably shared among all nations. Additionally, the conservation of such resources should be the responsibility of us all. Over the years, we have been conscious of the efforts to live up to this ideal, which has given us the freedom to work towards creating a more just and equitable division of this global common.

It is this belief which has led us to this workshop today**.** UNCLOS and the International Seabed Authority (ISA) have been instrumental in effecting greater understanding and treatment of our Exclusive Economic Zone, territorial waters and in our exploration and exploitation of the Area. However, the international community has recognized that the job of ensuring equitable distribution, sustainable use and development of the resources of the deep sea is not complete***;*** and that there is an urgent need to address ocean governance in a more holistic manner, to ensure that efforts to protect, conserve and share marine biological resources are given as much credence as efforts to secure the benefits of the non-living resources of the deep sea.

We are cognizant of the need for swift and decisive action to stem the unprecedented rate of loss of marine biodiversity. We are convinced that working together within the universal framework of the United Nations, we can halt this occurrence and create an enhanced form of ocean governance that results in integrated management and sustainable development of the oceans and seas, and the regulation of new and emerging maritime activities.

As Small Island Developing States, CARICOM countries are only too aware of the significance of the sea to their developmental imperatives. We have long looked to the ocean for our sustenance and have grown accustomed to its influence on our lives and livelihood. We consider this broadening of ocean governance to be in our best interest and are willing to engage in constructive and fruitful dialogue, at the United Nations to enable the General Assembly to take a decision, which we believe is integral to safeguarding the "***Future We Want***". Jamaica is therefore fully supportive of the process aimed at studying issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction.

We attach high importance to the enhanced mandate of the Open-ended Working Group, through which the scope, parameters and feasibility of an international instrument under UNCLOS on the BBNJ will be discussed. We believe that the elements to be considered: conservation, sustainable use - including the sharing of benefits- capacity building and transfer of technology, need to be addressed as a package. We have continuously reiterated our support for the "package" that was agreed by the Working Group in 2011 and subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly, and maintain that this must be held as the basic building block for the scope of a new international agreement.

This new agreement should also ensure a level playing field between developed and developing countries with attention given to the development of benefit-sharing arrangements based on transparency, information sharing and other disclosure requirements.

We have to be clear however, that any new implementing agreement under UNCLOS, has to define its relationship to other existing international agreements, as no provisions should be inserted that diminish the role of the International Seabed Authority in addressing issues related to the Area.

We have to work to ensure that in the international discourse we are of one accord, consistently voicing our firm belief that the genetic resources of the deep sea-bed and ocean floor and the subsoil thereof belong to all of us, thereby reaffirming the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and General Assembly Resolution 2749 (XXV).

Indeed, our political will and commitment have been strengthened by discussions within the context of the upcoming Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, as well as the processes underway to create a set of sustainable development goals and elaborate the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The state of the oceans and seas has gained prominence in these inter-linked processes; the key message of which is collective action to develop practical solutions that will produce tangible improvements aimed at sustainable development.

In this context, we commend the initiative of the Pew Charitable Trusts and the High Seas Alliance for affording CARICOM states this opportunity to deepen our understanding of the potential scope and parameters for a new international legal agreement; to enable frank exchange on the feasibility of such an agreement and to share views on national interests and priorities on the issues under consideration. Discussions on marine genetic resources, including area-based management tools,

marine protected areas and environmental impact assessments will allow government officials to learn from scientific, legal and conservation experts, and assist in national preparations for the remaining inter-sessional meetings in New York in June 2014 and January 2015.

It is for these and other reasons that Jamaica's National Council on Ocean and Coastal Zone Management, which I have the privilege to chair, has determined that, within its work plan for the 2014-2015 fiscal year, the BBNJ will be an area of focus.

Ladies and gentlemen, in this workshop we have been given the opportunity to elaborate and consolidate our position on this critical development issue. I charge you therefore to use this opportunity judiciously, and as the pioneers of UNCLOS, resolve to create a legal framework which will benefit this and succeeding generations.

I thank you.