

Opening Remarks By
Hon. Robert D. Pickersgill, MP
Minister of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change
At COP18, Doha, Qatar
December 5, 2012

Distinguished Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues and Friends;

On behalf of the Government of Jamaica, I would like to extend our gratitude to the Government and people of Qatar for their kind hospitality, and to the UNFCCC staff and volunteers who worked hard and diligently.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Climate Change is the epochal, multi-sectoral, trans-boundary issue of our time which at this stage is proving to be disruptive and regressive, attacking the natural and built environment, our economy and our society.

This universal phenomenon is threatening the very economic base on which we seek to build our country and the time honored traditions inherent in our culture.

Without our collective concerted actions here at COP18, Climate Change will continue to be a major obstacle in achieving the sustainable development goals of my country.

While we have been attempting to adapt to the impacts of climate change, I implore all of us to accept the stark reality that there are some impacts that are proving to be beyond our ability to adapt. Specifically, the increased temperatures and acidification of our seas amply demonstrate that fact. The slow onset event of increased sea temperatures threaten to bleach and destroy our coral reefs. This will ultimately make our coastal areas more vulnerable to storm surges, and predictably wipe out our tourism dive industry, fisheries and eventually threaten our food security. The creeping, yet ever so silent slow onset event of acidification also threatens our reefs and will slowly collapse the entire conch and lobster industries. What we are seeing my friends is the potential obliteration of two of the most critical industries to my country's economic well being, as well the economies of other small island states.

Since 2001, Jamaica has lost an annual average of 2 percent of GDP in damage and other losses associated with hurricanes,

floods and droughts. The cumulative cost of this damage and loss has been estimated at close to J\$120 billion; and this is money which could have been used to improve our education, health and infrastructure sectors.

When one ponders the cumulative effect of this, the set back to our sustainable development becomes stark. I highlight this not only because of the actual loss and damage, but also because of the impact on our debt due to borrowing in order to finance the recovery and reconstruction.

Islands like ours cannot ignore the signs; we live through these impacts every day. We pay for and continue to pay for the loss and damage from these events even though we are not the causative agents. **This is not right.**

Since we have no control over stopping impacts such as acidification or increased water temperatures, then it is only just and fair that those who continue to ignore the obvious signs, and impose this burden on us, begin to be

held accountable for the havoc they are unleashing on us small islands!!

The commitments made to reduce emissions must be kept. We are all aware that unless there are drastic reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions, all efforts of adaptation will increase in cost exponentially. Therefore, let me urge all major emitting countries, in particular, those that are already industrialized, that they should significantly scale up their emission reduction pledges in the coming months. Failure to do so will result in a world that will be significantly warmer with weather systems whose destructive power will prove to be beyond our imagination.

It was my hope that the mechanism to deal with Loss and Damage would have been established at this COP, under the

DOHA Platform. Failure to do this and instead opt for, yet again, one more year of another work programme, is not only "Rome burning" but is like continuing to "fiddle while our islands sink"

Nevertheless, we shall get on with the work that needs to be done. We must be afforded the opportunity to develop

our countries without increasing emissions and ensure that our development can take a more sustainable path. We will continue to do **all that we can to** conserve on our use of water and energy ---- but must lament the slow pace of progress in significantly reducing the cost of alternative energy sources.

Slow onset impacts in a 4 degree world will affect all countries not just Small Islands. We ALL ARE IN TROUBLE. You see my friends, we are all adrift in the same boat, and half of the boat won't sink, the **entire** boat will. We are all in this together.

With that I wish you all God's Blessings and Seasons Greetings.
Thank You.