



Jamaica's Foreign Minister Kamina Johnson Smith interacts with her Japanese counterpart, Toshimitsu Motegi, during a press briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade on Port Royal Street in Kingston. Motegi reconfirmed his nation's efforts to support the Caribbean in areas such as healthcare, trade, and the environment. **RUDOLPH BROWN**

Japan, Jamaica and CARICOM - Strengthening traditional friendship



ON JULY 19 and 20, Toshimitsu Motegi, minister for foreign affairs of Japan, visited Jamaica. It was the first visit to Jamaica for a foreign affairs minister of Japan. During his stay in Jamaica, he paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Andrew Holness, and had bilateral ministerial meeting with Senator Kamina Johnson Smith, minister of foreign affairs and foreign trade. Afterwards, he co-chaired the Seventh Japan-CARICOM Ministerial Meeting online, which is the first Japan-CARICOM ministerial meeting held in a Caribbean country. This historical visit became a valuable opportunity to further strengthen the 'Japan and Jamaica partnership' which was launched during the visit of former Prime Minister Abe in 2015.

Countermeasures of COVID-19 was one of the main themes of the ministerial meeting. For Jamaica, Japan has contributed medical equipment and implemented the 'Last One Mile Support' to enhance cold chain storage capacity for distribution of vaccines valuing US\$3.07 million. Also, to secure fair access to vaccines, Japan co-hosted the COVAX AMC summit with Gavi. Japan is committed to contribute US\$1 billion and secured well beyond the target of US\$8.3 billion to secure 1.8 billion vaccine doses to protect nearly 30 per cent of the population of developing countries. During the meeting, we agreed to continue further cooperation towards the improvement of vaccine access for CARICOM countries.

COVID-19 is having a severe economic impact on Jamaica and CARICOM countries. Minister Motegi emphasised the need

of post-COVID-19 economic recovery based on "digital" and "green". Japan will be strengthening cooperation among Jamaica and CARICOM countries in these fields. Japan is among a few countries that provide development assistance in fields such as disaster prevention and the environment, considering the vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States. Although economic relations between Japan and Jamaica are good through Blue Mountain coffee, Japanese cars, and the power sector, there is still untapped potential. During Minister Motegi's visit, we discussed cooperation to develop Special Economic Zones as a Logistics Hub which is environmentally friendly and resilient against natural disasters. Through this cooperation, we expect further strengthening of our bilateral economic relations, including new investment from Japanese enterprise to Jamaica.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is another important issue for Japan, Jamaica and CARICOM countries. Last year, Japan declared 'Carbon Neutral by 2050' and in the Leaders' Summit on Climate in April, Japan specified an ambitious target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 46 per cent over 2013 levels by 2030. Also, during five years from 2021 to 2025, Japan is committed to disburse US\$60 billion to climate change assistance, and to contribute to Green Climate Fund US\$3 billion to actively support climate change projects in developing countries, including Small Island Developing States. For Jamaica, Japan is implementing loan and technical cooperation in the field of energy efficiency. Japan has technology using hydrogen for renewable energy and discussed the possibility to cooperate in this field. Japan appreciates Jamaica's active role on UN climate change negotiations and we confirmed to strengthen our cooperation on COP26, and beyond.

In conclusion, Japan and Jamaica are maritime nations surrounded by the ocean and important partners which share fundamental values, such as freedom, democracy and the rule of law, and affirmed to deepen association for the promotion and expansion of a free and open international order based on the rule of law. During Prime Minister Andrew Holness' visit to Japan in 2019, we made an agreement on the provision of disaster prevention and patrol vessels. We started dialogue about cooperation in the fields of humanitarian assistance, disaster risk management and PKO (Peacekeeping Operations) between both defence authorities. It is important to deepen our dialogue further in such fields.

Minister Motegi's visit to Jamaica was just two days before the official opening of Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. We appreciate strong support of the Tokyo Games from Jamaica and CARICOM countries. On the 8th of August, the Tokyo Olympic Games was safely closed despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Japan as a host nation would like to thank all relevant people who made an effort towards organising a safe and secure event. We would be delighted if the Tokyo Games could contribute to the deepening of global bonds by unifying the world under the COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to applaud the great success of dynamic Jamaican athletes who won nine medals, including four gold. 'Omedetou-gozaimasu (Congratulations!)'. As sports always play an important role on Japan and Jamaica relations, we would like to further exchanges and cooperation in the field of sports between our two countries, as discussed during Minister Motegi's visit, in this Olympic year and beyond.

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