



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY BRIAN WALLACE  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE DRUM DIALOGUE  
"BEATS OF SOLIDARITY: DRUMMING FOR PEACE AND EQUITY"**

**ARK OF RETURN, UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK  
MONDAY, 14<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2025**

### ***Excellencies,***

It is my honour to join you for this Drum Dialogue under the theme "Beats of Solidarity: Drumming for Peace and Equity".

I extend my appreciation to UNFPA for hosting this event, along with the members of the Outreach Programme on the Transatlantic Slave Trade, OHCHR and the Africa Center.

It is always a humbling experience to stand here in front of the Permanent Memorial to Honour the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the "Ark of Return". This year, we celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary since its unveiling here at the UN and Jamaica is proud to have played a pivotal role, along with CARICOM, the African Union and other partners, to see through its installation in 2015.

The Permanent Memorial stands as a reminder of a brutal past - one in which over 15 million men, women and children were forcibly removed and trafficked from their homeland across the Atlantic and into the Americas. The unspeakable conditions under which they were subjected on the journey and which they knew they would face in the New World under the horrific system of chattel slavery, forced many to jump overboard, choosing a dignified death over a life of servitude.

The Ark of Return calls on us to reflect on this tragic past while recognizing its persistent legacies in the lives of People of African Descent today.

## **Excellencies,**

The Transatlantic Slave Trade may have physically separated Africa from its Diaspora but in truth, our connection was never lost. Today's Drum Dialogue draws upon that deep connection that has echoed through the souls of our ancestors over centuries; the dialogue that has taken place through our music, storytelling, art and culture.

Drums have played an important role in the history and culture of Jamaica and were used by the enslaved not only to communicate, but also to cope with their difficult circumstances. They formed the basis of various religious practices, such as those of Rastafarianism and Kumina and were used as a form of escape from oppression.

Reggae music, with its distinctive emphasis on drum and bass, is rooted in the struggle of our people and was born to serve as a channel through which to advocate for social justice, peace, freedom and equality. In so doing, reggae music also inspired many of our brothers and sisters on the African continent who were in pursuit of their own movements of independence and social justice. I only need mention the name Bob Marley for you to understand the impact.

## **Excellencies,**

Today, we celebrate the rich and diverse culture of people of African Descent and bear witness to the immense talent, resilience and intrinsic connection of our People through the sounds and vibrations of these drums.

In truth, some things do not need to be said but are felt and understood and I urge you to allow yourselves to feel that connection, as you are taken on this transcendent journey.

Now, as we begin the Second International Decade for People of African Descent, it is my hope that we can finally see true recognition, justice and development for People of African Descent and that this will find resonance with all peoples of the world.

It is our duty to do so not only in seeking justice for our ancestors but in realizing true justice for current and future generations.

I thank you.