



GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
16TH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF STATES PARTIES TO
THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES**

STATEMENT BY

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WITH DISABILITIES**

GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL

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Mr. President,

Jamaica is pleased to provide an update on the progress being made in its implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The Government of Jamaica engaged the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in a constructive dialogue in March 2022, for which the Government took serious note the commendations and the principal areas of concern and recommendations provided in the concluding remarks. Jamaica maintains its commitment to the progressive resolution of the concerns and is intent on making more significant advancement with the Disabilities Act 2014 now in effect. This Act established the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (the Council) as a body corporate, along with the establishment of the Disabilities Rights Tribunal (DRT) to promote, protect and ensure the rights of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities and their caregivers now have an avenue of redress for discrimination through the DRT. This provision is an important first step toward the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the CRPD.

Following its engagement with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2022 the Government of Jamaica has taken steps towards strengthening and implementing mechanisms for the effective involvement of persons with disabilities, in the following ways:

1. **General Principles and Obligations (art. 1-4)** The Government of Jamaica is actively pursuing work toward the review of its Constitution including the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, 2011. The Council is intent on ensuring the Charter is fully aligned with the provisions of the Convention including the review and repeal of outdated language contained in relevant legislation.
2. **Social Protection:** Through partnership with United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), technical support is being provided to strengthen Jamaica's child-sensitive shock responsive social protection system.

3. **Accessibility (art. 9):** Progress is being made to ensure accessibility through the adoption and use of an Accessibility Checklist approved by the Bureau of Standards Jamaica. The National Road Council is reviewing legislation to ensure the roads are safer and more barrier free. During this financial year the Government will acquire 50 new buses, all of which are accessible to persons with all disabilities.

4. **Equality and non-discrimination (art. 5):** While the matter of social housing for persons with disabilities remains to be fully addressed, through the National Housing Trust (NHT), persons with disabilities or their caregivers can now access additional benefits to retrofit their homes for greater accessibility. The benefit for the grant was increased from \$150,000.00 to \$300,000.00.

5. **Awareness-raising (art. 8):** Over the last year, the Council engaged in Thirty-One (31) public awareness sessions in which there were six (6) major partnerships with the banking sector and Government Ministries to engender greater sensitization on the Disabilities Act.

6. Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies (art. 11):

The Government as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic provided grants of over \$40M which was accessed by over 3,000 persons with disabilities.

Through advocacy the Operation Birthright Programme now makes provision for free birth certificates to persons with disabilities.

- 7. Work and employment (art. 27):** through sensitization sessions promotion for the employment of persons with disabilities accessing jobs in the open labour market, has improved. In addition to the provision of economic empowerment grants for self-employment, there is increased interest from public and private sector for the employment of persons with disabilities.

In closing, Mr. President, Jamaica maintains commitment to its obligations under the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and will continue to make significant strides towards its implementation.