



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

STATEMENT BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY E. COURTENAY RATTRAY
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OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

On

**Agenda item 3 (a): Socially just transition towards sustainable
development: the role of digital technologies on social development and
well-being for all**

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Mr. Chair,

Jamaica aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Grenada on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

We thank the Secretary-General for the recommendations contained in his report on the priority theme **“Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being for all”**, and wish to highlight a number of developments in our own country on this particular issue.

Mr. Chair,

Jamaica’s commitment to the goals of poverty reduction, reducing inequalities and social inclusion, is evidenced by a suite of programmes that provide both social assistance and social insurance. These programmes seek to ensure that citizens have access to nutrition, education and social protection. We share the view that social protection is one of the most effective policy instruments for simultaneously reducing inequality and poverty, while also promoting inclusive growth.

Mr. Chair,

Although progress has been made, it has been uneven. This situation has been magnified with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, exposing serious gaps in universal social protection coverage. To ensure that those

in vulnerable situations do not become further disenfranchised as a consequence of the pandemic, we have intensified efforts to strengthen our social protection programmes. We have also sought to utilize technology as the primary driver of modernization; a process that has entailed the digitization of records, including the transition from paper based payment of social benefits to electronic forms of payments. Although these initiatives began in 2018, they were accelerated in response to the onset of the pandemic, resulting in greater operational efficiencies. For example, we achieved an increase of 19% in electronic payments between March and December 2020.

Mr. Chair,

It is timely that dedicated focus is being placed on examining ways social policy can promote a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable post Covid-19 recovery. We share the view that investing in human capacity is crucial to ensuring that individuals and their communities are empowered and equipped to withstand shocks. To enable families to cope with the challenges of the pandemic, Jamaica boosted its welfare systems to provide additional financial support to beneficiaries. We have also been delivering food and hygiene packages to needy families in quarantine and other families in need. These initiatives, though short-term, are aimed at providing a cushion to the most vulnerable population during the pandemic.

Mr. Chair,

To build resilience and foster a recovery course that is sustainable, Jamaica is actively involved in honouring its commitment to realizing the SDGs, in particular SDGs 1 and 2. The pandemic has spurred further explorations into the feasibility of establishing an unemployment insurance programme, which will represent a structured approach to building resilience among workers and their dependents in times of job loss.

Mr. Chair,

The global community must devise innovative and forward-looking strategies to respond effectively to the new challenges brought on by the pandemic. As we rebalance our economies, we are called to rethink the nature of global cooperation, so that we not only recover stronger but position ourselves to become more resilient to future systemic shocks. Persistent global problems, such as the impact of the pandemic on global value chains, require broad-based cooperation to achieve strategic global solutions. For example, international cooperation can bolster global supply chains by addressing the issue of export restrictions, and promoting e-commerce and digital trade.

Towards this end, Jamaica reaffirms its continued support for the efforts of the Commission, and the wider United Nations systems, to find viable solutions to the pandemic, and the long-term goals of securing poverty eradication and reducing inequalities.

Thank you.