



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

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OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON

AGENDA ITEM 65 (A): PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN
AGENDA ITEM 65 (B): FOLLOW-UP TO THE SPECIAL SESSION ON CHILDREN

THIRD COMMITTEE

65TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, let me associate my delegation's statement on the agenda items now under discussion, with the statements made by Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; by Chile on behalf of the Rio Group; and by Barbados on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Through you, Mr Chairman, I wish to express my delegation's gratitude to the Secretariat, the Executive Director of UNICEF, and the Special mandate holders, for the informative briefings and the comprehensive reports highlighting, *inter alia*, some of the challenges encountered as well as accomplishments made in the execution of their mandates.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the years, the United Nations has played a critical role in advancing the welfare and protection of the world's children. It has not only facilitated the implementation of the Convention, but also has played a proactive role in addressing new and emerging issues affecting children through the several mechanisms it has established or pursued. Despite the commendable achievements of the UN system, in many respects and to varying degrees, the situation of children around the world still falls short of our expectations.

This year, the Committee will again be negotiating a resolution on the Rights of the child with a focus on early childhood. We look forward to its adoption by consensus.

Mr. Chairman,

The welfare and protection of children remains a cornerstone of Jamaica's national policy which also translates into action at the regional and international levels. It is therefore with serious concern that we took note of the sobering prospects for the world's children as stated in the report of the Secretary General on the **Follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children**, including the fact that in developing countries, an estimated 195 million children under the age of 5 still suffer from stunting; that more than half a million mothers still die annually as a result of childbirth; and that some 69 million children of primary school age are still out of school (53 per cent of them girls).

We also remain gravely concerned about the worrisome trends in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. We support the recommendations contained therein, and it is imperative that we pursue them with vigor.

Additionally, the international community must continue undertake sustained action and redouble its efforts to address the alarming trend of children living in situations of armed conflict around the world, arising from conflicts in various countries and regions, and the negative impact on children. In this regard, I use this opportunity to announce my Government's intention to formally endorse and support the Paris Commitments and

Principles relating to children associated with armed forces and armed groups; and we will be communicating with the Government of France on our endorsement shortly.

As a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Jamaica remains steadfast in our mission to vastly improve the situation of children. Ratification of the Convention by Jamaica in 1991 was a first major step that signaled this resolve.

Allow me, Mr Chairman, to say a few words on the situation in my country.

At the end of 2007, Jamaica's population stood at approximately 2.7 million. The most important demographic variable in Jamaica is the significant change in the age profile of the population that has occurred over the past three decades. The proportion of children, which currently stands at 34.3%, is projected to fall gradually to under 30% by the year 2020. Children born in Jamaica today have more than a 97% chance of surviving beyond age five, and almost a 100% chance of enrolling in school up to the secondary level and will go on to live on average, over 73 years.

With regard to the MDGs, I am pleased to report that we have made significant progress in child-relevant policy goals, some prompted by international commitments like the CRC and the MDGs, while others were adopted as central to the Government's human development strategies. I acknowledge that my country was deemed far behind in targets for child and maternal mortality. However, it is recognized that this is partly because Jamaica already has comparatively low mortality rates and further gains are mainly dependent on increased financial, technological and human resources.

The current global economic recession has resulted in the Government of Jamaica facing increasing challenges in implementing its social policies. For example, there have been several well-developed plans and policies, which would have naturally assisted in making a positive difference in the lives of children. Unfortunately however, these have not been able to receive the required funding to ensure implementation.

Mr. Chairman,

Notwithstanding these challenges, the Government of Jamaica remains resolute in its commitment to improve the lives of the nation's children. In this regard, Jamaica has implemented a wide-ranging policy to counter violence against children, with the involvement of non-governmental organizations and civil society.

A comprehensive review of domestic legislation, many years in the making, culminated in the enactment of the **Child Care & Protection Act (CCPA)**, which became effective on April 1, 2004. The Act has done much to strengthen the care and protection system for children in Jamaica as, in addition to being the focal point of decision-making, it has introduced new standards for their treatment. It brings under one umbrella, measures previously embedded in the now repealed Juvenile Act, as well as provisions from many other pieces of legislation.

Among other things, the CCPA makes specific provisions for the establishment of four important entities for the protection of children: the **Children's Advocate**, the **Children's Registrar**, **Children's Registry** and the **Children's Court** specified in the Act.

Mr. Chairman,

A World Fit for Children identified five main pillars which must remain a top priority if we are to fulfill our promise to our children to: promote their health; provide quality education; protect them against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combat HIV/AIDS. Creating a world fit for children must, at a core level, seek to create the right environment for children at every aspect of their development. It must, of necessity, include the situation of the child at the level of primary care provision involving the family, community, national, regional and international levels.

Jamaica firmly believes that promoting and protecting the rights of the child and creating a world fit for children demand a comprehensive approach by the international community. At the heart of this is the need for a coordinated approach to the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations and other international conferences and summits, whether they are trade-related, geared towards social and economic development, poverty eradication or human rights promotion and protection. Central to these is the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, towards which we must intensify our efforts if they are to be realized by the approaching deadline of 2015. At the same time, we must also continue to give special attention to the needs of the girl-child.

I thank you.

