



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

TO THE

PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SPECIAL SESSION OF 2001

FOR FOLLOW UP TO

THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR CHILDREN

7 FEBRUARY 2000

(Please check against delivery)

Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

I am most honoured to have been elected to chair the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations General Assembly Special Session in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. My election is a tribute, not to me personally, but to my country Jamaica, and indeed to the region of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Today, we undertake the formal preparatory process for this Special Session. Our work will lay the foundation for the deliberations of and renewed commitments to children, to be adopted at the 55th Session of the General Assembly.

As we embark on this journey, it is necessary to recall the remarkable legacy we inherit. By bold vision and foresight, outstanding leadership and action taken by individual Governments, non-governmental organizations and by the United Nations system, we have placed children at the centre of the world's agenda,

We recall the remarkable celebration in the General Assembly Hall in November 1989 when, without a vote, Member States adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the unprecedented gathering of Heads of State and Governments in 1990 at the World Summit for Children. These political leaders adopted a bold Declaration and Plan of Action and set goals for the year 2000, which is why we are here today.

We must also recall the recent and unprecedented actions taken by the Security Council to focus attention on the widespread and unacceptable violations of children's rights in conflict situations, and on the tragedy of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, recognizing the threats that these can pose to international peace and security.

Distinguished delegates,

It is fair to state that over the past ten years, important inroads have been made in advancing the welfare of children. Many countries have succeeded in overcoming the major challenges for child survival and development, and a reasonable number of the goals set at the World Summit for Children have either already been met, or will be met by the time the Special Session of the General Assembly convenes next year.

Nevertheless, the reality of millions of children in the 21st Century is sobering, and in many areas simply unacceptable. Children and women, whose lives and future are so intertwined, are still the overwhelming majority of poor people in most countries. They are the ones dying disproportionately of AIDS; they shoulder the heaviest burden of disease; they have the least protection from or recourse to the rule of law; and they exercise the least influence on power and decision-making.

Distinguished delegates,

There is both urgency and importance in our assignment and we must keep the desired outcomes for children in the forefront of our minds, as we begin our deliberations.

As the President of the UNGA reminded us last September, "Human security and our own future depend on the survival of these children, particularly those who are constantly falling through the cracks in the Third World."

Our work therefore must be informed by both progress and failures in efforts to achieve agreed goals for children; the lessons to be learned from these experiences; the responsibility we share in attempting to chart a future global course of action; and the truly magnificent opportunity we hold in our collective hands. Our task is humbling and awe inspiring, and our responsibility great.

We must ensure that the outcome of our deliberations over the coming months leading up to the Special Session in 2001, will be worthy of the time, energy and considerable resources that we will devote to this preparatory process.

I believe that with tenacity, a single-minded sense of our important mission, and good-will, we can, collectively, make a major contribution to shaping a different reality in the 21st Century and a better future for children and humanity. The eyes of the world are on us. We must not let the world's children down.

Thank you.

*Permanent Mission of Jamaica to
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