

**Statement by
Mr. Easton Williams
Jamaica
to the 41st Session of the United Nations
Commission on Population and Development
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Agenda Item 4: General debate on the contribution of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, in all its aspects, to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

Theme: Population Distribution, Urbanization, Internal Migration and Development

Mr. Chairman,

Jamaica extends heartiest congratulations to you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. You can rely on our full support and cooperation in your efforts to guide the Commission to a successful outcome during its 41st Session.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past 20 years, much emphasis has been placed on issues relating to reproductive health, poverty, HIV/AIDS, ageing and more recently, international migration. It is therefore fitting that the issues relating to the theme for the 41st Session - urbanization, internal migration and development – is now being accorded the prominence they deserve. There remains much room however, for integration of these issues in policy formulation and planning. The lack of timely, adequate and appropriately disaggregated data on urbanisation, population distribution and internal migration also poses constraints on the ability to plan effectively and efficiently at the local level.

Mr. Chairman,

Recently, in Jamaica, we have observed increased interest in matters relating to population distribution, urbanization and

development. This is owing to the fact that with the rapid urbanization of Jamaica experts have predicted that at present trends population growth is projected to be concentrated in urban areas, particularly in medium and smaller sized zones.

The Government's long-term development plan aimed at making Jamaica a developed country by the year 2030 is an additional factor which has captivated this interest. This is the first time that the Government has diverted from its customary path of short-term five-year planning, to long-term horizons.

This shift has necessitated a renewed emphasis on sustainable development and the primacy of population distribution, urbanization and internal migration matters in the planning process. It should be noted that Jamaica has also embarked on the construction and use of a long-term general equilibrium model (better known as T21) being facilitated by the Millennium Development Institute for providing policy guidance as we move towards attaining developed country status. As you may be aware, population factors including population distribution are central in the T21 family of models.

Mr. Chairman,

The UNFPA State of the World Population Report 2007 focusing on urbanization and development provides a valuable reservoir of information and insights. Interestingly, one significant point which is repeated throughout the report is that **urbanization is inevitable**. This salient fact has provided a paradigm shift for policy thinking in Jamaica. In the past, national policies addressing issues of urban and rural development reflected conflicting positions. Both urban and rural policies and programmes were counteractive and restrictive rather than proactive and facilitative. A new approach at integrating both urban and rural policies and programmes is only now beginning to take shape.

The launch of the UNFPA 2007 report in Jamaica was held outside of the capital city, Kingston. This decision was a strategic one. The launch took place in a fast-growing urban town (Old Harbour) which has great potential for further growth. Old Harbour's

infrastructure is totally inadequate to serve the needs of its growing population. Additionally, the various local government departments responsible for town planning as it relates to roads, water, electricity, housing, public health and environment have been operating in a disintegrated and disjointed manner. Unfortunately, this scenario is all too common in all towns and urban centres across the island.

In an effort to make a difference, the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), which is under the auspices of Office of the Prime Minister, established a national multi-agency working group comprising high-level representatives. The working group is mandated to design and implement a strategy for ensuring an integrated approach to national, urban and rural development planning. The Prime Minister has also taken steps to facilitate and consolidate the process by relocating departments and agencies with national planning portfolios to his office.

Mr. Chairman,

Jamaica shares many of the characteristics of urbanization, internal migration, population distribution and development which are feature of the wider Latin American and Caribbean region as indeed reflected in the Secretary-General's Report before the Commission, namely "World population monitoring, focusing on population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development". As stated in the report, future population growth in Jamaica will be concentrated in urban areas. Internal migration from rural to urban areas and also within urban areas has been significant contributory factors in this process. The role of natural increase in urban growth cannot be precisely determined, however, at this juncture as the data on births and deaths are not yet disaggregated by urban/rural residence. It is clear though, that fertility rates in the urban areas are substantially lower than those in rural areas.

The age and gender structure of the population in urban areas is more suited to development than that in the rural areas. The dependency ratio in urban areas is lower than that in the rural areas. This suggests that the urban population in Jamaica has less "economic

burden” and greater potential for savings and investment than its rural counterpart.

As the Secretary-General’s report also affirms, households in urban areas in the Caribbean region, certainly for Jamaica, tend to be smaller and record higher levels of per capita income and consumption than households in rural areas. Similarly, households in urban areas, particularly those in the English-speaking Caribbean, reflect lower proportions of persons in absolute poverty than those in rural areas. Absolute poverty in Jamaica is measured by a standard basket of goods and services for a family of five persons - two adults and three children. A national household sample survey has been conducted annually over the past twenty years to provide the relevant data on poverty and other variables on living conditions.

Mr. Chairman,

In concluding, we acknowledge that the task ahead is daunting and the resources required for urban planning and development are enormous. However, we are convinced that our enhanced understanding and continued engagement of the urbanization, internal migration, population distribution and development process, will enable us to better formulate and implement appropriate policies and programmes, which will guide us to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.