

**INTERVENTION BY JAMAICA
DURING THE THIRD SESSION OF CONFERENCE OF STATE PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
SEPTEMBER 2, 2010**

Thank you, Mr Chairman,

Since this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor, let me congratulate you on your election as Chair of the Conference of States Parties; I also offer congratulations to the other Members of the Bureau on their election. We are confident that with your experience you will ably guide the deliberations of this Conference to a successful conclusion.

Let me also express our appreciation to the distinguished members of the panel for their comprehensive presentations on inclusion and living in the community – an issue of tremendous relevance to the disabled community.

Mr. Chairman, we are gathered here once again to participate in a major conference that will impact the lives of over 650 million citizens of the world - a group of citizens that have been marginalized and heavily discriminated against due to circumstances of which they have no control.

It may be recalled, Mr. Chairman, that in 2007, Jamaica was the first country in the world to simultaneously sign and ratify the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We did so, because we have a fundamental belief that persons with disabilities should be provided the opportunities that will allow them to maximize their full potential.

Prior to signing and ratifying the Convention, my country participated vigorously in the discussions which led to the creation of the first international convention for the new millennium. We were proud to be a part of that august body of committed and focused individuals who stood steadfastly in the crafting of this Convention.

Mr Chairman, as we consider the theme of today's session, I would like to update the Conference on two new developments in Jamaica that are relevant. Jamaica has been working on national legislation to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, and I am pleased to report that we have finally amended regulations that were on the statutes for over 50 years, preventing the deaf from driving on Jamaican roads. Today, all deaf persons in Jamaica are eligible for a driver's license.

One of our major universities, namely, the University of the West Indies, has established a Centre for Disability Studies and is focusing on research that will significantly impact the quality of life of persons with disabilities in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean. A major initiative coming out of this university is the development of a model for a Global Disability Index, which is being designed to track and measure the progress of Member States with implementation of the Convention. This landmark global index will rank Member States in a similar fashion to the Human Development Index. We believe that this disability index

will be a significant contribution not only to our region but will also benefit the global community.

Finally, Mr Chairman, Jamaica is committed to the advancement and implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We are committed to improving the quality of life of these vulnerable but talented individuals. We wish for this Conference all the success and urge Member States who have not yet signed and ratified the Convention, to do so urgently.
