



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

STATEMENT BY

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OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

on

**On agenda 3 (A) Priority theme: Addressing Inequalities and Challenges to Social
Inclusion through Fiscal, Wage and Social Protection Policies**

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Thank you Madame Chair,

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the delegation of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), regarding the need to increase our collective and national efforts to address the challenges resulting from rising inequalities within and between countries, so as to ensure greater participation of all members of society. We remain convinced that the pursuit of social development is intrinsically linked to the achievement of Agenda 2030 and our commitments to the Program of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

In this respect, we commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports to the Commission. The findings of the Report on the priority theme reinforce the need for continued action at the national, regional and multilateral levels to address significant and persistent disparities that threaten to diminish the gains already made globally.

Madame Chair,

Jamaica has a consistent track record of implementing programmes that improve the welfare of those in need of state assistance. These social protection systems have been subject to reform aimed at ensuring they are efficient and effective, and promote inclusive development through the reduction of inequalities.

Improvements to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security

Our Ministry of Labour and Social Security, which is charged with the implementation of Jamaica's social protection policies, continuously implements measures to improve its services. These include the expansion of its presence across the island through the opening of 2 new offices in northern and western parishes. Additionally, the Ministry's internet network will be upgraded to improve the speed with which services are provided to the public.

National Social Protection Committee (NSPC)

In keeping with the Government's efforts to strengthen inter-agency collaboration a multi-sectoral oversight body, the National Social Protection Committee, has been created. It is focused on addressing four thematic areas, namely: Social Transfers; Social Services and Infrastructure; Human Development; and Income Security. The Committee identifies opportunities for knowledge sharing, consensus building and networking for improved delivery of programme goals and objectives. This institutional framework has a dual purpose of monitoring the attainment of our national development targets, as well as those related to the Sustainable Development Goals.

National Policy on Poverty and National Poverty Reduction Programme

In September 2017, a new National Policy on Poverty, and a National Poverty Reduction Programme was approved. Since then, the Medium Term National Poverty Reduction Programme 2018-2021 has been developed, along with a monitoring and evaluation framework. The thrust of

the new Policy and Programme is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2022; empower more sustainable livelihoods for families in poverty; alleviate the worst deprivations through the expanded reach of basic social assistance; address the psycho-social barriers to breaking out of poverty; and build individual and community assets. In addition, a National Poverty Reduction Programme Committee has been convened to provide a forum for coordination and programme monitoring.

Public Spending on Inequality and Social Inclusion

Notwithstanding the fiscal consolidation programme currently underway, Jamaica has allocated increased budgetary resources to the Jamaica Social Protection Strategy Programme. By so doing, our capacity to improve the quality of and access to the network of social services provided to poor and vulnerable citizens has been greatly enhanced. A feature of this new expenditure will be the allocation of increased resources towards improving human capital and labour market outcomes for the poor.

Madame Chair,

National Policy for Senior Citizens

Jamaica continues to make efforts towards alleviating inequalities of access and opportunity to resources and services, by elderly persons and children with disabilities. To this end, discussions are underway regarding the development of a National Policy for Senior Citizens.

There is also an ongoing review of policies to inform, protect and secure persons with disabilities and elderly persons in the event of disasters. This

is intended to ensure that disability and elderly-friendly interventions are in place, including adequate communication mechanisms, shelter and social services.

Advances have also been made over the past two years in expanding the physical capacity of the Early Stimulation Programme to provide education and therapy for young children with disabilities. In this regard, additional early stimulation programme assessment centres for young children with various types of developmental disabilities have been constructed.

Youth Participation

The Social Protection Strategy (2014) and the National Youth Policy (2017) both reinforce the role of training, labour market activation, and skills-building as the avenues for empowering labour market attachment for youth. Several government programmes (such as, Steps-to-Work, HOPE programme, and On the Job training and apprenticeship programmes,) have a focus on youth, where unemployment rates are typically above the national average. In January 2019, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security signed a MoU with the Montego Bay Community College, situated in the western region of the country, in an effort to bridge the skills gap and form a sustainable nexus between jobseekers and employers. The project will enhance the job-readiness of candidates through training workshops that build their capacity to craft proper résumés, prepare for interviews and learn how to work in teams. It is expected that this will assist in addressing the issues of high youth unemployment and contribute to Jamaica's productivity and development.

Madame Chair,

In closing, notwithstanding the disappointing and negative trends in some of the indicators, particularly those pertaining to income and wealth inequality, we are optimistic that with coordinated action at the national, regional and global levels we will be able to address the challenges we face nationally and as an international community. Towards this end, Jamaica reaffirms its continued support for the efforts of the Commission.

Thank you.