



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

STATEMENT BY

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**ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE
OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION
ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

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Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I congratulate you and other members of the Bureau on your election and wish you every success in steering our discussions during this 11th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Jamaica aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of Friends of Persons with Disabilities.

This year's overarching theme of "***Leaving no one behind through the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities***" is most appropriate, as persons living with disabilities are often left behind by virtue of their vulnerability and are negatively impacted by attitudinal and environmental barriers. This belies the fact that persons with disabilities make meaningful and significant contributions to the achievement of sustainable development goals, through their effective participation in their communities and society as a whole.

These considerations have guided the policies and measures adopted by Jamaica through the passage of the National Disabilities Act in 2014 and since becoming the first signatory to the Convention in 2007. The Disabilities Act enables the work of the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities, now in its 45th year, by protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and promoting their socio-economic development.

Access to Information/Services

Jamaica is committed to providing basic services to all its citizens and residents, including persons with disabilities. Our national utilities regulator, which regulates service providers of water, telecommunications and electricity, has recently developed a policy for greater social inclusion and the provision of enhanced customer service to persons with disabilities.

Jamaica is in the process of establishing a National Identification System (NIDS) which will be used to securely and reliably verify citizens' identities and serve as a national database. The National Statistical Institute estimates the number of persons with disabilities at 580,000, although this is not reflected in the number of registrations. The NIDS will allow for greater registration of persons with disabilities to ensure that no one is left behind, assist with data collection, as well as facilitate allocation of benefits.

Physical Access

The Building Act, passed earlier this year, makes special provisions for improved accessibility to buildings for persons with disabilities. A "Ramps for Schools and Hospitals" project was launched last month to improve levels of access in schools for persons who are physically challenged. In this regard, the Ministry of Education has earmarked \$50 million to equip schools with wheelchair ramps.

Education

There are approximately 44 independent and government-run special education facilities at the pre-school, primary and secondary levels across the island that cater to children with disabilities. The Ministry of Education has recently increased funding for Student Support Teams, which comprise of a clinical psychologist, an educational psychologist and a diagnostician, to provide support to students with disabilities across all regions. A total of 420 students with disabilities are currently enrolled in private schools, which receive government grants for salary support and student premiums.

Public Awareness and Codes of Practice

The Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities launched a national awareness campaign in November 2017 to sensitise citizens to the provisions of the Disabilities Act; educate persons with disabilities on their rights; and encourage advocacy for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in their families and society.

Jamaica is in the process of developing codes of practice to offer practical guidance on expanding the level of participation of persons with disabilities. The Codes of Practice on Education and Training and on Employment are slated for finalisation at the end of this year.

Mr. Chair,

While disability is specifically mentioned in five goals in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, full and effective implementation of the SDGs and the Convention requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that spans all goals. Jamaica remains committed to this vision of leaving no one behind and our delegation looks forward to hearing other good practices throughout the course of this session.