



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

**STATEMENT BY**

**MS. DENIESE SEALEY  
DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

on

*Agenda Item: 3(a)(i) "Priority theme: women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls"*

65<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission on Status of Women  
25<sup>th</sup> March 2021

New York

Please check against delivery

Mr. Chair,

Jamaica thanks the Secretary-General for the recommendations contained in his report on the priority theme, “*Women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls*”.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana on behalf of the Caribbean Community, and would like to share a number of developments in our own country, on this particular issue.

Mr. Chair,

Twenty-six years ago, Jamaica joined 188 countries in adopting the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to achieve gender-equality. More than two decades since its adoption, it is lamentable that no country has achieved this goal. We note with grave concern, UN reports that indicate that women and girls continue to face discrimination globally, and that there are persistent gaps in their participation in economic activities, decision-making and political leadership. While we acknowledge that some progress has been achieved in increasing the number of women elected or appointed to decision-making positions, their numbers remain significantly low. Notwithstanding, we remain committed to the twelve overarching priority areas for action identified in the declaration. We take this opportunity to also reiterate our commitment to pursuing the full implementation of the Declaration.

Mr. Chair,

We are pleased to report that Jamaica has made good progress in some areas of focus to achieve gender equality and is now ranked 41<sup>st</sup> on the Global Gender Gap Index of 153 countries. Jamaica, along with 24 other member states, enjoy top ranking in our achievement of parity in education. Globally, we are ranked 24<sup>th</sup> for economic participation and opportunity. This ranking is as a result of the fact that both men and women are equally engaged in professional and technical professions, without significant differences in senior roles. However, our rankings in the areas of health and political empowerment are not to our satisfaction even as the number of women elected to the House of Representatives in our September 2020 national elections increased. Women now make up 28.5 per cent of members of the House. Nevertheless, we will continue our efforts to remove the obstacles, including discrimination, that prevent women assuming leadership roles.

Mr. Chair,

The rapid spread of the novel coronavirus has threatened to derail the limited progress that has been achieved over the past two decades. Jamaica is alarmed at reports that the pandemic has deepened pre-existing socioeconomic inequalities and has disproportionately impacted women and girls; resulting in many losing their livelihoods and independence, and many experiencing increased exposure to domestic violence as a result of having to ‘stay in place’ with their abusers.

Jamaica reaffirms its firm commitment to ending violence against women and girls. In this regard, the Government of Jamaica has actively sought to undertake legislative reform to prevent violence and sexual harassment against women and girls, as well as provide services, including the opening of shelters, for victims. In March 2020, the Government launched the Spotlight Initiative Jamaica<sup>1</sup> – a multi-year partnership involving the European Union and the United Nations, aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls. Jamaica has also taken steps to ensure that national COVID-19 recovery efforts include a gender perspective. We established a multi-sectoral/stakeholder Task Force to oversee the country’s economic recovery from the pandemic.

Mr. Chair,

There is an overwhelming body of evidence highlighting the undeniable connection between women’s economic participation and prosperity. As such, Jamaica joined a 31-member core group of countries endorsing the US-led International Call to Action on Women’s Economic Empowerment. The Call to Action urges all governments and relevant stakeholders to remove structural and legal barriers and implement labour market policies to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all. The Government has further sought to ensure that women play a greater role in decision-making in keeping with the National Policy for Gender Equality, which requires a

---

<sup>1</sup> The Spotlight Initiative in Jamaica will address violence as a public health and development issue, under the banner of family violence, with a focus on three priority areas: child sexual abuse; intimate partner violence; and discrimination against vulnerable groups, including the elderly and members of society with disabilities and special needs.

minimum of 30 per cent of either gender to be represented on Government of Jamaica boards of management.

Mr. Chair,

Jamaica is further committed to working with the UN and other international partners to fully implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. We will also continue to deepen our advocacy through mechanisms such as the Groups of Friends on: Women's Economic Empowerment, Gender Parity, and Women, Peace and Security, as well as the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls.

Against this background, we reiterate our support for the efforts of the Commission, and the wider United Nations systems. We hope that these discussions will help to accelerate our collective efforts to ensuring that a significant portion of the world's population is able to effectively contribute to national, regional and global advancement and prosperity.

Thank you.