



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

**STATEMENT BY**

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**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 63<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF  
THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

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**Thank you, Madam Chair,**

Jamaica aligns itself with the statements delivered by The Bahamas on behalf of CARICOM and The State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We are pleased to participate in the deliberations of the Commission on the theme, “*Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*”. This is in keeping with our longstanding commitment to the various international and regional agreements to which we are a party, which promote the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of women and girls.

Embracing social protection is a key feature of Jamaica’s national development priorities, as reflected in our national development plan Vision 2030 Jamaica. These national priorities are also complemented by our ongoing efforts towards the attainment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Jamaica’s national policy framework has been responsive to the increasing global demand for greater integration of gender within the context of development, which culminated in the adoption in 2014 of our comprehensive National Social Protection Strategy. The Strategy promotes gender, age and location as cross-cutting themes and determinants of national social protection policy imperatives. This strategic approach has broadened opportunities for accessing services, expanded the provision of housing opportunities and education, as well as increased the provision of social protection transfers to households, whether in cash or in kind, under the National Insurance Scheme (NIS).

The adoption of a gender perspective takes into account the life cycle concerns of all citizens. This is manifested in several revised policies, including the 1997 National Policy for Senior Citizens, the 1995 National Population Policy, and the 2017 National Policy on Poverty and Poverty Reduction Programme.

Madam Chair,

The Government has taken several steps to protect the rights of women in the labour market. These are reflected in our ratification in 2016 of the ILO Convention C189 on Decent Work for Domestic Workers, and the Employment (Flexibility Work Arrangements) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, in 2014. The latter seeks to provide an avenue for increased employment opportunities and enhanced productivity, while allowing for greater balance with respect to the needs of families. It is also intended to facilitate greater independence for Jamaican women and reduce poverty rates, particularly among female-headed households.

Jamaica is currently the only Caribbean country participating in the UN Women Win-Win: Gender Equality Means Good Business Programme. The programme has developed a set of seven principles, the Women Economic Empowerment Principles (WEP), which guide companies to implement actions to advance gender equality in the workplace and community. It also promotes gender equality in the private sector by supporting women entrepreneurs and their businesses. I am proud to report that sixteen Jamaican private sector companies have committed support for the WEP, which allows for the full and equal participation of women in society.

Other initiatives include the signing in November 2017 of a MOU between the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, to provide greater opportunities to disadvantaged women in the micro, small and medium-size enterprise sector. As a result, the Women Entrepreneurship Support Project was launched in November 2018, under which four female entrepreneurs received financial support in the amount of 1 million Jamaican dollars for projects in a variety of fields.

The empowerment of women and girls in Jamaica also extends to the political and legislative arenas. Consequently, the Government continues to support the activities of the ParlAmericas Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality (PNGE), formerly known as the Group of Women Parliamentarians, a regional network that has been in existence

since 2003. Through its inter-parliamentary gatherings, the Network has focussed on issues such as women's economic empowerment, ending gender-based political violence, electoral reforms to promote women political candidates, gender-sensitive media and communication, among others. The outcomes of these discussions serve to inform the development of specialised resources and online communities for our parliamentarians.

Madam Chair,

Jamaica's successes have not been met without its fair share of challenges. We remain particularly concerned about the increasing reports of incidents of violence against women and girls. As such, we continue to implement measures to prevent and eliminate all forms of gender-based violence. These measures include:

- the establishment of the Gender Advisory Council (GAC) in 2018;
- the launch in June 2018 of the Women's Health Survey 2016 Jamaica, which is the first nationally-led prevalence study on Violence Against Women in CARICOM;
- the implementation of the National Strategic Action Plan to Eliminate Gender-Based Violence, and the "No Excuse for Abuse Public Education Campaign;"
- increased Government expenditure to establish a shelter to provide safe haven for women who are victims or survivors of gender-based violence; and
- the revision of existing legislation which purport to, among other things, protect women, children, the disabled and the elderly from violence and abuse.

Notwithstanding these steps, there remains much work to be undertaken for which international cooperation is needed. This includes but is not limited to data collection systems to support the development of evidence-based policies to address issues affecting our women and girls. Cooperation through joint partnerships and initiatives will also be critical.

Madame Chair,

In conclusion, our deliberations over the next few days must result in a renewed commitment to the protection of our women and girls. Their success will ultimately redound to the benefit of our societies as together we seek to advance the 2030 sustainable development agenda and create the future we want.

Thank you.