



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

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY**

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OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

during

*“DELTA DAYS AT THE UNITED NATIONS”*

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

New York

Good morning,

I hope that you and your families are doing well during these challenging times.

I am pleased to join once again, the distinguished Ladies of Delta Sigma Theta and guests, during the annual “Delta Days at the United Nations”; this time around in a virtual format.

As you know, last year’s event had to be postponed as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Millions of lives have been impacted and I extend sincere sympathies to those who have lost loved ones, and wish a speedy recovery to those who have been hospitalized.

This year’s session of the Commission on the Status of Women focuses on *“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”*. It seeks to highlight our ongoing efforts to tackle violence against women and also to ensure they are able to contribute to national development in a meaningful and concrete way. This is of particular importance if we are to recover from the pandemic and recapture the hard won developmental gains we had recorded prior to COVID-19.

Although progress has been made in women’s representation in various fields of endeavour at different levels, the numbers remain woefully low. It is unfortunate that in the 16 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action no country has achieved gender equality. The Secretary-General’s report on this issue highlighted that “women’s higher levels of poverty, more limited access to finance, and greater share of care duties combined with exclusionary institutional rules and procedures, limit their full participation”. Women, therefore, remain on the margins where many are mere spectators, watching crucial

decisions being made about their lives without their involvement and with little regard for hearing their needs and views.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, as it has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls. Many have lost their livelihoods and independence, and others have faced increased exposure to domestic violence as a result of having to 'shelter in place' with their abusers.

There are some encouraging examples, however, of tangible progress being made. There is evidence in several countries of women serving in leadership positions, such as in Finland, where the response to the crisis has been particularly effective. It is regrettable, however, that for the most part women remain on the fringes of key decision-making processes.

We must, therefore, work diligently to create inclusive and enabling environments in which women are empowered to pursue, to the fullest extent possible, their dreams and aspirations for public life. Additionally, we must establish more ambitious targets, increase political will and create gender-responsive institutional arrangements that provide platforms for women to advocate more effectively through the exchange of ideas and information.

In relation to Jamaica, we have made solid progress in some areas and are now ranked 41st on the Global Gender Gap Index of 153 countries. Additionally, an increased number of women were elected to parliament in national elections held last year. Women now make up 28.5 per cent of members of the House of Representatives. We obviously still have some ways to go, but will continue our efforts to remove discriminatory and other barriers that hinder the ability of women to assume key leadership roles. We have also taken steps to ensure that national COVID-19 recovery efforts include a gender perspective. Additionally, we continue the process of legislative reform to prevent violence and sexual

harassment, while dismantling the barriers that keep women away from decision-making tables.

As the Secretary-General's report acknowledges, "women have a right to be equally represented and consulted in decision-making". Delta Sigma Theta Inc. has a proud heritage of providing the enabling environment in which young women are able to enhance their advocacy and leadership skills. They are encouraged to use their voice to advance issues of concern, and to become critical agents of change.

I note that the theme for the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Delta Day's discussion is: ***"Power in Our Voice: Women Leading from Margin to Centre"***. I anticipate that you will have dynamic and constructive exchanges on how Delta Sigma Theta can continue its rich heritage to prepare women for leadership roles in diverse areas, including at the highest decision-making levels.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you know we are at a crossroads. We are at risk of not achieving Target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals; in which we commit to ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life. We cannot wait until 2077 to achieve gender equality – which is the current projection, given the slow rate of progress. If we do not act now, we will not deliver on the promise to leave 'no one behind'.

Thank you and I wish you fruitful and enriching discussions throughout the rest of the day.