



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

STATEMENT BY

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE ARNOLD J. NICHOLSON
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
FOREIGN TRADE OF JAMAICA**

AT

**THE PLENARY MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE VICTIMS OF
SLAVERY AND THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE**

**UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK
25th MARCH 2015**

Mr. President,

Jamaica aligns itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 & China and the distinguished Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

I am honoured to speak at this year's Commemorative Meeting, and feel particularly privileged to do so following today's unveiling of the Permanent Memorial.

Jamaica is proud of the prominent role played by the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in the Permanent Memorial initiative.

We feel especially honoured to have been given the responsibility for steering it to its successful outcome.

I express special appreciation to our brothers and sisters from the continent of Africa who partnered with us throughout the entire process.

To the other members of the Permanent Memorial Committee, led at first by Ambassador Raymond Wolfe, former Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the UN and now by Ambassador Courtenay Rattray, our current Permanent Representative, please accept our heartfelt appreciation for your dedication to the planning of the activities around the initiative.

Of course, Jamaica remains truly grateful to the entire membership of the United Nations and to those who contributed to the Initiative. Without your generous contributions, the project would not have been possible.

Mr. President,

Slavery and the transatlantic slave trade have left an injurious legacy, the effects of which continue to be felt in the lives of people of African descent all across the globe. It has manifested itself in racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance.

As it is often said, *"those who do not know their history are destined to repeat it"*.

In this regard, there is a need to ensure that the Permanent Memorial initiative and its associated activities reach and resonate with the people outside these venerable halls.

We commend the work of the Secretariat, through the United Nations Department for Public Information, for expanding the reach of the programme through partnerships and collaboration with organisations around the world.

However, we encourage the Department to further intensify its outreach efforts with a view to ensuring that the lessons of struggle, hope, victory, equality, non-discrimination and harmony are imprinted into the hearts and minds of the international citizenry, and that bigotry will become a thing of the past.

Mr. President,

It is most fitting that the theme of this year's commemoration is "Women and Slavery".

We dare not forget that women suffered monstrously during one of the darkest moments in human history.

The great human rights icon Nelson Mandela once said: *"the legacy of oppression weighs heavily on women"*. The truth of this statement echoes throughout history, as evidenced by the barbarism of slavery and its impact on women.

Black women suffered the horror of being raped repeatedly, bred like cattle, robbed of family and denied the joy of nurturing their own children.

Mr. President,

The struggle for equal civil rights and the advancement of women has been long, bitter and painful.

I pause to recognise some of the heroines of emancipation: the Jamaican national heroine, Nanny of the Maroons, the Cuban fighter La Carlota, Mary Prince of Bermuda and Harriett Tubman of the United States of America.

They dared to believe that it was possible to overcome the dehumanization and indignity of slavery and the slave trade. They fought courageously against the evils of oppression, torture and injustice.

In paying tribute to the women of the past, let us redouble our efforts to build on the foundations they laid, "lest we forget".

We must ensure, Mr. President, that these stories are told.

We must heal the wounds.

We must right the wrongs.

Let us also recall that this year marks the 20th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 - attended by my own Prime Minister who is here with us today.

That conference produced landmark outcome documents - the Beijing Declaration and Programme for Action - which have charted the course towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, journeys on which we have embarked over the past two decades.

Let us not fail to give meaning to those commitments.

And may history find reason to judge us more kindly where our women are concerned.

I thank you, Mr. President.