



**THE UNITED NATIONS 76TH UNGA SPECIAL EVENT
VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN TIMES OF CRISIS**

**WELCOME REMARKS BY
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE KAMINA JOHNSON SMITH
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE**

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Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is an honour to join my fellow Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs in welcoming you – in New York, Geneva and elsewhere – to this Special Event on Violence Against Children in times of crisis.

I wish to thank, in particular, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Permanent Mission of Bulgaria to the United Nations for coordinating this engagement with such a broad representation of experts and stakeholders to allow for truly meaningful exchange of experiences, challenges and solutions.

These discussions are so timely as navigating a society through a pandemic has not only threatened our economies, but also the safety and security of our children. The well-being and protection of our children, and especially the prevention of violence against children, is a matter of priority in Jamaica as it must remain for us all. And so we join in embracing the goal of today's event to



devise ways to address the problems identified, by implementing the lessons and solutions highlighted.

Excellencies,

Children are the stewards of our collective future. They have always needed our nurturing and protection but even more so today. In combatting violence against children – so multifaceted and cyclic, and for which the causative factors often intersect - an integrated, multi-sectoral and inclusive approach must be pursued.

As one of the first countries to be a Pathfinder country to the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, Jamaica adopted such an approach in devising the National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence 2018-2023 and the accompanying Road Map for Ending Violence against Children. These policies, this Action Plan, provide a coordinated framework to improve the lives of children by addressing the issues which lead to violence against them.

As alluded to more broadly earlier, COVID-related economic contractions have made everything more difficult but Jamaica is committed to doing the work necessary to support our children. This includes strengthening public financing for ending violence against children; enhancing the support we give to parents and caregivers; as well as strengthening prevention and response systems across all sectors.



It bears emphasising, Excellencies, that with restrictions on movements, stress-inducing job losses and school closures, the pandemic has exacerbated the threats to our children at many different levels. Data supports what we have all understood to be happening, that is, violence against children – a subset of family violence – has increased.

As we continue to experience the effects of the pandemic, therefore, this important issue cannot be forgotten. It cannot be sidelined. International cooperation will be needed for national efforts as a complement and I am confident that the commitments to be expressed by delegates today will signal a renewed effort to protect our children, especially during this difficult time.

Our collective efforts in the remainder of this decade are important to achieving the SDGs. Given the interconnectedness between them and the future of our children, success in the implementation of Agenda 2030 will determine the quality of the lives of our children. I am hopeful that the next time we convene, progress will have been made towards the goal of ending violence against children. We should view the discussion today as providing the momentum required for deliberate and ambitious actions to be pursued by us all.

At this time, I wish to give the floor to Dr. Najat M'Jid, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, who will lead us in the Opening Session. I thank you.

