



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

STATEMENT BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY E. COURTENAY RATTRAY
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE**

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CONVENTION ON
THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (CRC)**

**UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK
21ST NOVEMBER 2019**

Mister Chair,

In 1989, the global community committed to an international standard for the treatment of children, to protect their fundamental rights and freedoms, by agreeing to *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Three decades later, Jamaica is pleased to join the international community in celebrating this achievement, which transformed the approach to child rights protection. The Convention remains an essential and welcomed addition to the corpus of human rights instruments.

Among other things, The Convention made the principle of the best interest of the child an indispensable concept, which is now the overarching consideration when treating with matters related to children.

Jamaica ratified the Convention in 1991, and since then has put measures in place to meet our international obligations to adequately provide for, protect and promote the well-being of our children. We recognize that children are our nation's future and that each experience a child has during his or her development, impacts the future of our country. Simply put, the future of Jamaica belongs to the children of today.

Therefore, the charge to us as a nation is to invest in the care and protection of our children now. Jamaica's National Development Plan, Vision 2030, "**Jamaica, the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business**", represents a promise to our children. It is a promise that we all must keep, as we all share a responsibility to ensure their growth and development.

Mister Chair,

With a full appreciation of the importance of the care and protection of our children, Jamaica continues to strengthen its domestic programmes, policies and laws, as well as its efforts to improve multilateral and bilateral partnerships geared towards implementing the provisions of The Convention.

Jamaica became a party to the “*Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction*” on 1st May 2017. The Convention focuses on protecting children from the harmful effects of their wrongful removal or retention from their habitual residence. The *Children (Guardianship and Custody) Act* was amended to implement the provisions of this Convention. We are currently partnering with eight (8) other countries under this Convention to promote the protection of our children, and work is underway to increase this number so as to broaden the range of our cooperation.

In January 2018, the *Child Care and Protection Act*, was amended to increase the prison time for individuals who participate in child trafficking, from 10 to 20 years. Jamaica has also enacted the *Child Diversion Act 2018*, to treat with children and young persons who come into conflict with the law. This will assist in treating these individuals with dignity and fairness, while imparting positive values.

Mister Chair,

Jamaica became a member of the “*Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children*” in order to facilitate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal 16. Of particular relevance is target 16.2, which seeks to “*End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children*”. In this regard, Jamaica has prepared and adopted a “*National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence*”, which was launched on 19th November 2019. It will serve as the government’s main policy framework to devise mechanisms to protect children against violence.

Additionally, on 19th November 2019, Jamaica held a Special Parliamentary Session on Violence against Children to address this challenging issue. The Special Session provided, **for the first time in the nation’s history**, an opportunity for children, to address Parliament directly and to call for action to be taken to protect them from all forms of violence and abuse. Their call was supported by the Parliamentarians, including the Most Honourable Prime Minister, Andrew Holness, who in recognizing the

30th Anniversary of the CRC recommitted the Government “to protect our children from all forms of violence and exploitation.”

These positive steps are reflective of our commitment to safeguard and build upon the child protection framework in Jamaica. While we note that new risks and threats exist, such as those that arise from the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), we remain committed to protecting our children and to providing opportunities for government, the private sector, civil society, academia and international organizations to partner together to strengthen the ongoing efforts in this regard.

We recognize that a collective approach is required to implement the objectives of the framers of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, so that 30 years from now, the children of today who will become the adults and seniors of tomorrow, will reap the benefits of the work that was done to assure them a better future. The vision of Jamaica to which we are committed is of empowered children, thriving in a country where they are free to achieve their fullest potential. The framework of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, will help us to achieve this goal.

I thank you.