



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

STATEMENT BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**AGENDA ITEM 10: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT ON HIV/AIDS
AND THE POLITICAL DECLARATIONS ON HIV/AIDS**

**72ND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK

12TH JUNE 2018

Thank you Mr. President.

The Government of Jamaica reiterates its commitment to the Political Declarations related to HIV/AIDS and their effective implementation towards meeting sustainable development goal 3, specifically target 3.3. to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

My delegation recalls the most recent commitment made by our Heads in this Assembly Hall in 2016 **on the fast-track to accelerating the fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030** and welcomes the opportunity, at this halfway juncture, to share the progress achieved in the national context in attaining the ten (10) 2020 fast track commitments.

In this regard, we thank the UN Secretary General for his report contained in document A/72/815 and note the recommendations therein to support Member States' efforts to reduce AIDS-related deaths to fewer than 500,000 globally; reduce new HIV infections to fewer than 500,000 globally; and eliminate HIV related stigmatization and discrimination – all by 2020.

Since 1982, 35,904 persons in Jamaica were diagnosed with HIV, 72.6% of whom are still alive. At the end of 2016, an estimated 30,000 persons were living with HIV in Jamaica at a prevalence rate of 1.7%. However, higher prevalence rates are recorded for at-risk groups such as commercial sex workers, inmates and homeless persons.

The accelerated “Fast-Track” approach is a valuable tool in achieving the 90–90–90 targets: that by 2020, 90% of people living with HIV know their HIV status, 90% of people who know their status are receiving treatment and 90% of people on HIV treatment have a suppressed viral load so their immune system remains strong and the likelihood of their infection being passed on is greatly reduced.

Jamaica has recorded progress towards these goals in the following focus areas:

- Four out of every five persons living with HIV in Jamaica (88%) know their status. This is the highest percentage in the English-speaking Caribbean and close to the 90 per cent target. In comparison to 2010, where epidemiological data indicated that only half (50%) of those infected with HIV were aware of their status, this is a strong achievement for the country. This success is attributable to the range of testing options that have been made available, including community outreach approaches, provider-initiated testing, and focused services for key populations.
- The AIDS mortality rate declined from 25 deaths/100,000 people in 2004, to just over 13 deaths/100,000 people in 2016, representing a 48% decrease since the inception of universal access to anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) in 2004.
- The mother-to –child-transmission (MTCT) rate has continued to decline over the past 3 years (2014-2016), with 2% of babies being infected with HIV in 2014 and 1% in 2016.

Even as we acknowledge these strides, we remain mindful of and focussed on tackling the remaining challenges:

- In 2016, newly diagnosed cases reported to the Ministry of Health amounted to 2,015. Of this, 15% or 305 were reported to the National Epidemiology Unit for the first time as deaths. This is an indication that despite immense success in testing in 2016, there is still need for wider testing.
- Significant gaps remain with respect to treatment. The government intends to redouble efforts to ensure that, once diagnosed, people are linked to treatment, retained in care and achieve viral suppression.

- While significant progress has been made towards achieving the target of ending mother to child transmission (MTCT), there is a lag in the achievement of the key monitoring indicators.

Mr. President,

Jamaica supports addressing HIV/AIDS in a comprehensive way, in particular through addressing the overlapping epidemics of HIV and tuberculosis. In this regard, we are pleased to note that the first high-level meeting on tuberculosis will be held later this year and we support a stronger link between HIV and tuberculosis in the outcome document for that meeting.

The Government of Jamaica is maintaining its focus on a whole-of-government, whole-of-society, multi-sectoral approach to tackling the HIV epidemic by engaging persons living with HIV and other stakeholders from civil society, private sector groups, and international development partners, as well as within government. These partnerships have been guided by the national plan and programme to respond to HIV, which was crafted in 1988 and we hope to strengthen existing partnerships while forging new collaboration for the effective implementation of national policies gearing at arresting and ultimately eliminating the AIDS epidemic.

My delegation looks forward to hearing the progress achieved by other Member States in the implementation of the Declaration and remains available for continued exchanges on best efforts to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.