



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**Statement by H.E. Raymond Wolfe
Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Jamaica
to the United Nations**

at the

Informal Thematic Debate of the General Assembly

on

**The Promotion of Gender Equality and the Empowerment
of Women**

Tuesday, 6 March 2007

Madam President,

We thank you for organizing this very important debate, the subject of which will remain relevant until gender equality and the empowerment of women is universally and fully realized.

Given the limited time allotted to speaking in this debate, my brief remarks will be confined to looking at Jamaica's national efforts that are consistent with internationally agreed standards that seek to promote and protect the rights of women and girls. I offer for consideration three issues we would like to share perhaps as "lessons-learned" that my Government considers to be important. Our guiding principles include the Beijing and Cairo outcomes, the targets of the Millennium Development Goals the landmark Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other similar instruments.

We regard legislation as one of the most effective tools towards eliminating discriminatory practices against women and girls. In this regard our national machinery for women - The Bureau of Women's Affairs has undertaken a review of up to 42 pieces of legislation, resulting in a programme of legislative reform, to that end. Included in this is the Domestic Violence Act which is a major effort by our Government to stem the practice of violence against women - a pervasive human rights violation and the subject of one of the most recent reports of the Secretary General which continues to attract debate at different levels.

Madam President,

In order to determine the direction in which we must go, we believe it is important to be able to develop instruments and checklists to monitor the status of gender equality. We are pleased to report that a national Gender Development Index and a Gender Empowerment strategy have been developed. Out of these initiatives we have been able to establish that the quality of life of Jamaican women has improved in the area of life expectancy, combined gross enrollment ratios and estimated earnings. At the same time the Gender Empowerment Measure indicates that there is considerable disparity between men and women in the sharing of power at the highest levels of decision making.

We concur that gender equality and the empowerment of women are attainable through women's increased involvement in decision-making processes, including through political participation. One of our most obvious accomplishments in this regard is our status as one of only approximately 11 countries having a female Head of State or

Government. But the goal towards greater gender parity in political representation as well as in senior positions particularly at the corporate level remains elusive with the levels of participation of women in political decision-making fluctuating over time and are still below target at the level of income, despite women's equal or even higher levels of academic achievement over their male counterparts.

We continue to face many obstacles but believe that concerted action by all relevant stakeholders, including Government and non-Governmental Organisations, academia and partnerships at the international level will incrementally yield the desired results.

I thank you.