



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

**MRS. FAITH WEBSTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
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AT THE

**54TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**15-YEAR REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING
DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION (1995)
AND THE OUTCOMES OF THE TWENTY-THIRD
SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2000)**

New York, March 5, 2010

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Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a momentous occasion as we gather to celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

First, let me express our condolences and solidarity to the peoples of Haiti and Chile on their recent losses caused by the devastating earthquakes.

My delegation also wishes to align itself with the statement made by Yemen on behalf of the G77 and China, and Chile on behalf of the Rio Group.

Mr. Chairperson

Since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development goals, the Government of Jamaica has made efforts to advance the status of women. Although women have made significant strides in various sectors of the society, it is recognized that there are areas which still need to be strengthened to allow women the ability to fully contribute to development equally with men.

Violence Against Women and Legal Reform

Violence Against Women continues to be an area of critical concern and over the past fifteen years a raft of legislation have been reviewed and amended and new ones introduced in keeping with contemporary realities and in order to afford women and girls greater protection under the law, particularly in the area of gender based violence. Some of these are as follows:

- The Offence Against the Person Act, the section which addresses rape and the Incest (Punishment Act), have been amended and merged to create a single Sexual Offences Act. The Act will broaden the scope of legislative measures to specifically address sexual violence against women and children and will also include that of marital rape.
- The Domestic Violence Act to include women who are in visiting relationships.
- Legislation on trafficking in persons, namely the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.
- The Child Pornography Act was also passed late last year and will criminalize the production, possession and distribution in child pornography
- A Draft National Policy on Sexual Harassment has also been developed towards the enactment of a Sexual Harassment legislation to address sexual harassment in the workplace and other institutions

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender Mainstreaming has been an important thrust which the Government has embraced towards the achievement of gender equality goals. To this end, a Gender Advisory Committee was established to oversee the development of a National Gender Policy. In addition, Gender

Focal Points were established in key Government ministries and agencies to ensure that gender is integrated in all policies, plans and programmes. In that regard a Gender Analysis Checklist was also designed and focal point representatives, policy analysts and other functionaries in the public sector were given training and sensitization in basic gender concepts to assist them to incorporate a gender perspective in their work.

Women and Poverty

The Government of Jamaica has implemented a number of measures and poverty reduction strategies and a National Poverty Eradication Programme (NPEP) which targets vulnerable groups including women. A process of ongoing reform of the social safety net is to improve efficiency to ensure that women in general and rural women in particular have equal and non-discriminatory access to services.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV and AIDS

Efforts continue towards the prevention and reduction of HIV and AIDS through the implementation of the Government's National Strategic HIV and AIDS Programme as well as through other collaborative programmes with international partners such as UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNIFEM and local partners. Programmes range from the development of materials to support behavior change, interventions which target men, adolescents and persons with disabilities.

Education/Women in Power and Decision-making

Females continue to outperform males at all three educational levels - primary, secondary and tertiary. Despite this, the participation of women remains low at the highest level of decision-making, although higher at the lower levels of management. Currently the numbers are disproportionately low at 12% for women in political office; trade unions remain a male preserve at 39%, despite a female membership of over 50%. A recent research also revealed that only 33% of women were on state Boards, 16% on Boards of the private sector and they were markedly absent from Boards in traditionally male dominated fields such as transportation, finance and investment.

Mr. Chairperson

Undoubtedly, we have made significant strides, but some old challenges persist as well as we are faced with new and emerging ones including the global economic crisis. In fact, Jamaica has just recently signed an agreement with the International Monetary Fund which will in itself bring to bear new constraints.

The Government of Jamaica nevertheless remains fully committed to the empowerment of women and the pursuit of gender equality.

We wish to thank all our international development partners and women's NGOs who have supported and worked with us assiduously to bring about systemic changes to raise the status of women over the past fifteen years.

In closing, Mr. Chairperson, we look forward to the timely conclusion to negotiations on the establishment of the new gender entity and anticipate that adequate resources will be put in place to continue to carry out critical programmatic activities.

Thank You.

