

**Statement**  
**by**  
**Mr. Easton Williams**  
**Delegate of Jamaica**  
**on**  
**Agenda Item 4:**  
**General debate on national experience in population matters: New**  
**Trends in Migration - Demographic Aspects**  
**at the**  
**46<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and**  
**Development**

**23<sup>rd</sup> April 2013**

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Mr. Chairman,

Our delegation extends heartiest congratulations to you on your election to the chair of the 46th Session of the Commission. The theme for this session is both relevant and timely as we continue the process of elaborating a viable development framework for our common future. We are confident, therefore, that under your astute chairmanship we will reach conclusions in this session that will support the more effective implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and contribute to the post 2015 development agenda.

Jamaica associates itself with the statement delivered by Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 & China and that delivered by Cuba on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Mr. Chairman,

Jamaica has long been characterized by high levels of internal and external migration. During the pre-1930 period, Jamaicans migrated to Cuba, Panama, Costa Rica and other Central American countries seeking employment in sugar cane, banana and infrastructural development such as the Panama Canal. Between 1930 and 1960, Jamaicans migrated mainly to England to contribute to post-war reconstruction. In the period since

1960, Jamaicans have been migrating mainly to the United States and Canada. Other notable streams are to countries within the Caribbean, Africa and Europe.

Mr. Chairman

Allow me to put our external migration situation in perspective. Since the 1960s, approximately 20,000 persons have migrated to the - United States, Canada and the United Kingdom annually. This high outflow has significantly reduced population growth over the period. The emigrants are mainly within their prime working age 15-45 years and are predominantly females. A high proportion of the emigrants are categorized as educated and skilled. Recent studies by the World Bank and the Planning Institute of Jamaica have indicated that between 60-85 per cent of tertiary level graduates aged 25 years and over have emigrated from Jamaica to OECD countries. This has had significant implications for national development by reducing the pool of tertiary-level graduates in the workforce.

In spite of the high levels of external migration over the period, the relatively greater levels of fertility rates resulted in substantial population growth and a large population of working age 15-64 years. Indeed, Jamaica has a significant demographic bonus at present.

Mr. Chairman

In the 1940s internal migration became a notable feature of the demographic landscape of Jamaica. By the 1960s, approximately 33.6 per cent of the population resided in urban centres. Between 1960 and 1982, internal migration intensified and was characterized by movements mainly towards the capital city, Kingston Metropolitan Area. During that period urbanization increased to about 47.8 per cent of the population. Between 1982 and the present, the urban population grew to approximately 54 per cent of the total population; with the highest growth rates occurring around urban centres outside of the main city. These internal migration flows have reflected a predominance of persons in the under 40 age group, mainly females and a differential mix of educated and unskilled persons.

Over the years, internal migration and urbanization in Jamaica have been influenced by a range of push and pull factors. These include high population growth and poverty rates and low levels of development in rural areas. Growth in tourism, manufacturing, mining and services in urban centres attracted movements towards these areas. Economic growth in the urban areas, however, was not adequate to absorb the level of internal migration, resulting in squatter settlements, slums, infrastructural incapacities and crime and violence.

Mr. Chairman

Returning to the issue of international migration, Jamaica was among the countries which responded to and supported the UN Secretary General's surveys soliciting national views regarding the need for a global platform to address issues of international migration. Jamaica also participated actively in the formulation of the chapter on international migration in the ICPD Programme of Action. Jamaica's longstanding attention to international migration and related issues has continued through its substantive participation in the UN High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the Global Forum on International Migration and Development processes. We look forward to participating in the next High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development which will take place here at the United Nations later this year.

Jamaica is pleased to report that it has benefitted enormously from its involvement in these processes. Jamaica has also endorsed the perspective that international migration can be harnessed to benefit the countries of destination, the countries of origin and the migrants themselves. This is the basic premise on which we have been operating in the formulation of our comprehensive national policy and programme of action on international migration and development. The policy had been drafted and will be submitted to Cabinet for approval and subsequently tabled in Parliament for adoption in the months to come.

To give you an idea of how comprehensive our approach has been, we have formulated principles, objectives, policy goals and broad strategic actions as well as an implementation plan relating to the following: Diaspora and development; labour mobility and development; remittances and development; governance and policy coherence; family, migration and development; return, integration and re-integration; human rights and social protection; and data, research and information systems.

In developing the policy, extensive consultations were conducted with stakeholders across the island as well as with specialized technical and interest groups. The process was coordinated by a multi-sectoral working group with membership drawn from the government, private sector, non-government organizations and the international development community. The process was led by the Planning Institute of Jamaica and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

Throughout the process the Government of Jamaica received extensive financial and technical support from the International Organization for Migration, the Global Migration Group, United Nations Population Fund, United Nations Children's Fund and United Nations Development Programme. We wish to express our appreciation to the appreciate the Swiss Government, the European Union and other partners for their contributions and also for committing additional support for a second

phase geared towards implementation of the policy and mainstreaming migration into national development planning.

Mr. Chairman

Permit me to return briefly to the internal migration and urbanization issues. Let me state categorically that these issues have not been given the priority they deserve by both government and the non-government sectors over the years. This is probably one of the areas with the weakest record of implementation under the ICPD Programme of Action. That said, there seems to be an emerging interest by all stakeholders to redirect their focus towards urbanization issues. In Jamaica, the urban environment is highly vulnerable to most natural hazards, manmade disasters and social dislocations. In recent years, Jamaica has received substantial funding support from our international development partners to address sustainable development issues. We have also designed and are in the process of implementing a comprehensive urban Community Renewal Programme targeting one hundred volatile communities across the island. Given our experiences, we support efforts to integrate urbanization issues into the dialogue on migration and development.

In closing, Mr. Chairman,

Jamaica strongly supports the explicit incorporation of migration and its links with development into the Post 2015 Development Agenda. We believe that it is imperative that all countries pursue the goal of

mainstreaming migration into their national development strategies, policies, plans and programmes.

Thank you.