



STATEMENT BY

JAMAICA

TO THE

50th SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

ON

AGENDA ITEM 3: GENERAL DEBATE ON NATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN
POPULATION MATTERS: "CHANGING AGE STRUCTURES AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT"

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Introduction

Chair

The Jamaican delegation extends heartiest congratulations on your election as Chairman of the 50th Session of the Commission on Population and Development. We also extend commendations to the other members of the Bureau. Under your leadership, we anticipate that the Session will achieve all its objectives and guide the continued effective integration of population variables in our global development efforts. We endorse the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77&China by Ecuador and CELAC by El Salvador.

Chair,

The theme of this session is timely as Jamaica is fast approaching a turning point in its demographic transition. We have been experiencing a demographic bonus for over three decades now but this is peaking and will start to decline in the very near future. This favourable demographic situation is a direct result of our successes in reducing fertility and mortality rates. The combined effects have resulted in a rapidly ageing population. The Caribbean is one of the fastest ageing regions in the world and also records one of the highest external migration rates. This has not only increased the population ageing process but is also contributing to significant shifts in the age and sex structures of our populations.

Jamaica is currently at an intermediate stage of its demographic transition, that is, the child population is declining; there are increasing proportions of the population in the working age group and elderly populations. In recognition of the importance

of integrating population dynamics in development planning, the changes in the age structure were taken into consideration in the formulation of Jamaica's long-term National Development Plan, Vision 2030.

Chair,

These population dynamics are presenting both opportunities and challenges for us in Jamaica and also in the wider Latin America and Caribbean region in our quest to achieve sustainable development and navigate through the stages of our demographic dividend and beyond. These dynamics, however, are placing undue stress for reforms not only in social development (education and training, health, social protection, labour market and service provisions) but also in sustained economic growth and development and environmental protection. Jamaica is at the stage where it needs to redouble its efforts towards reaping the benefits of the remainder of its demographic dividend.

The demographic dividend provides a framework for thinking about sustainable development at a time when population age structures are changing. Having a youthful population does not guarantee economic growth; what a young population does provide, however, is the opportunity for a demographic dividend married with the right set of strategic investments. Significant investments will be required to unlock, leverage and catalyse resources; fashion policies, plans and programmes to address needs of a changing population.

Given that the Caribbean sub-region will shortly experience below replacement level fertility, in context of high net migration, the age structure of the population will be

severely distorted. Concerted efforts will be therefore need to be implemented to minimize the unexpected imbalances.

Over the next 5 years, Jamaica will revise and formulate several critical policies and strategies to address the changing demographics of the country. These include policies on: Population; Youth; Older Persons; International Migration and Development; Sexual and Reproductive Health; and Poverty.

The revision of the National Population Policy will be done within the context of Vision 2030 Jamaica, the Sustainable Development Goals and the provisions of the Montevideo Consensus, to reflect the linkages between population and development. Additionally, the revision of the policy will utilize the outputs of the National Transfer Accounts Methodology as applied to the Jamaican situation.

Work will also continue on the finalization and implementation of the Labour Market Reform Agenda, Pension Reform, implementation of the Social Protection Strategy and the accompanying Social Protection Floor and the National Growth Inducement Strategy.

Chair, permit me to underscore that the changes in Jamaica's population and development programme is a direct result of the success of partnership between the government and its partners for which civil society has played a critical role.

The priority for Jamaica to maximize the demographic dividend is to accelerate job creation by investing in human capital and ensuring an enabling environment for

private sector development; enhance labour market mobility, reduce barriers to female labour force participation, savings and investment; implement the national social protection strategy to address current needs and to meet the needs that emerge as ageing proceeds; improved justice systems and rule of law, and financial standards, must be in place for people to be willing to invest in the economy; and reducing corruption and improving efficiency.

Chair,

While these areas have been highlighted as strategic priorities over the past couple of years, there is still need for considerable focus on implementation and to ensure that the economic growth and social transformation which ideally should follow actually materializes. The pace of implementation has been slow while the demographic window of opportunity is closing. Our efforts have to be intensified to ensure that this does not become a missed opportunity.

Thank you