



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

MR. EASTON WILLIAMS, DELEGATE OF JAMAICA

AT THE

**43RD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION
ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

ON

AGENDA ITEM 4:

*"GENERAL DEBATE ON NATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN POPULATION
MATTERS: HEALTH, MORBIDITY, MORTALITY AND DEVELOPMENT"*

NEW YORK, APRIL 14, 2010

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Mr. Chairman,

The Jamaican delegation congratulates you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to steer the work of the 43rd Session of the Commission on Population and Development. Please be assured of my delegation's support and cooperation in the discharge of your duties.

Jamaica extends condolences to the people of Poland on the tragic loss of their President and other government officials.

Jamaica aligns itself with the statement delivered on Monday by the distinguished representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

Jamaica continues to reaffirm the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the key actions for its further implementation. The principles, objectives and actions contained in the ICPD Programme of Action have made significant contribution to the current and emerging legislative, institutional and programmatic realities in our country. However, progress in implementation has not been consistent or robust in all areas as we would have desired. Some of the goals and targets which we agreed to in Cairo as well as other internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, have already been achieved; in some areas, we are on track. In other areas however, progress has been lagging and may not be achieved within the desired timeframe.

Mr. Chairman,

Jamaica is classified as a middle-income developing country. The growth in GDP has remained low or negative over the past decade and is currently being severely impacted by the global economic recession. As a consequence, Jamaica has resumed a borrowing relationship with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The current projections are that some of the notable gains in social and human development may be compromised if significant international development assistance is not forthcoming, particularly in the short-term. This assistance will be necessary to assist in cushioning the negative effects expected from the impending structural adjustment programmes which will be implemented over the next eighteen (18) months.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the lacklustre economic performance, Jamaica has been able to make substantial progress in its demographic transition. Jamaica is currently at the threshold towards entering the advanced stage which is characterized by

rapid ageing and substantial increases in the elderly population, 60 years and over. This, in turn, will have major implications for the continuing shift in morbidity and mortality conditions.

Like other countries in the English-speaking Caribbean, Jamaica has also made the epidemiological transition from a predominantly infectious disease profile to one characterised by chronic non-communicable diseases. Chronic diseases comprise over 70% of all deaths in Jamaica. This proportion is expected to increase in the near future as the population continues to age. Deaths from chronic conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, neoplasms, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, hypertension and depression represent the leading threats to health and well-being in Jamaica.

Mr. Chairman,

With respect to the ICPD and the Millennium Development Goals, Jamaica has already achieved the targets set for poverty eradication and hunger and universal access to primary education. While we are on track to achieving the goals for universal access to reproductive health and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases, we are lagging behind in respect of the goals and targets relating to gender equality and environmental sustainability. Jamaica is also far behind on those goals relating specifically to infant, child and maternal mortality. To achieve these goals, over the next few years, Jamaica would have to secure substantive development assistance and design and implement a comprehensive programme to accelerate progress in this area.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the areas of major concern in Jamaica is the burden on the health services, created by the morbid conditions resulting from intentional and unintentional injuries. Deaths and injuries from motor vehicle accidents, gangs and drug-related violence as well as domestic violence consume a large portion of the health budget each year. Major efforts in policy and programme interventions at the national level will be required to reduce these highly preventable impacts.

The Government of Jamaica has taken bold steps both in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes for ameliorating some of the critical issues in health and development. The Government is placing greater emphasis on primary health care as the main strategy for the future of health provisioning. The Government has also taken the bold step in removing user fees from all public health institutions thereby bringing health care within the reach of the poorest segments of the population. The Jamaican Government has also established the National Health Fund for subsidizing the cost of drugs

for persons suffering from chronic diseases including those with mental disorders and has successfully implemented the Drugs for the Elderly Programme, geared primarily towards subsidizing the cost of drugs for the elderly. Antiretroviral medicine has now been made available to most persons infected with HIV/AIDS.

In this regard, Jamaica has observed major reductions in mother-to-child transmission of HIV and has also seen declines in the number of deaths from HIV/AIDS. The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate has remained stable at about 1.5% of the adult population since 2005. Despite these achievements, the rate of infection remains higher among young people, particularly females. The Government has also launched a National Surveillance and Management System for contagious diseases with a good cadre of support workers to better monitor and deal with outbreaks of such diseases.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.