



PERMANENT MISSION OF  
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

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ON

AGENDA ITEM 3A:

**IMPROVING PUBLIC SECTOR EFFECTIVENESS**

AT THE

42<sup>nd</sup> SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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*Please check against delivery*

Mr. Chairman

Jamaica aligns itself fully with the statement made by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development this Commission has addressed a number of critical issues in keeping with its mandate to promote the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Since 1996 we have had priority themes related to poverty eradication, employment, social integration, social services, review and appraisal of Summit outcomes, social protection, integration of economic and social policies, and national and international cooperation for social development. Most of the recommendations and proposals emanating from these deliberations are in various ways linked to the effective functioning of the public sector. Against this background, this year's priority theme "Improving Effectiveness in the Public Sector" is timely and of paramount importance.

In academia, one of the most common introductory lessons taught to students of sociology is Talcott Parsons' concept of 'basic functional prerequisites' (Adaptation - associated with the economy; Goal Attainment - linked with the system of governance; Integration - linked to the legal system; Pattern Maintenance- achieved through the social institutions). It is argued that all these sub-systems are linked to the functioning of society as a whole and that dysfunction in any part results in 'disequilibrium'. It is instructive that the system of governance is linked with 'goal attainment'.

The existence and effective functioning of public sector institutions is indeed central to the meeting of society's goals. As stated in the Report of the Secretary General on this theme (E/CN.5/2004/5):

**"The public sector encompasses those entities owned and/or controlled by the State and its central, regional and local agencies. These agencies include government departments or ministries, public agencies and a variety of statutory bodies, as well as public enterprises. State ownership can be total or partial, but essential to the public nature of an institution or activity is the existence of a regulatory regime and mode of operation determined by public authorities"**

With the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programmes and the introduction of de-regulation, liberalisation and privatisation policies, 'downsizing' of public institutions became a popular prescription for developing countries. The triumph of the free market and advent of globalisation were seen by many as requiring 'leaner' governments. Initially, most public sector reform processes were therefore focused on reducing budget deficits by expenditure cuts that had an adverse impact on the social sector.

Growing inequities within and between countries, financial crises, increasing poverty and social instability are all factors that have combined to foster new thinking on the role of government, and its regulatory functions as well as the need to include a social policy agenda while pursuing monetary and fiscal policies. There is now much greater consensus that a good macro-economic policy framework, while necessary, in and by itself is not a sufficient condition for development. Whether by design or default, economic

policies have a social content. Those that use only market-based criteria will overlook non-market inputs and outcomes and concentrate benefits in the hands of a few.

Mr. Chairman,

The current global context rather than diminishing the responsibility of governments to their citizenry, makes it even more imperative to develop policies to promote strong and effective state institutions. Issues of equity, social justice, and in particular access of the poor, the disadvantaged, the dispossessed and the socially excluded, to services and opportunities to transform their lives, are inextricably linked with the performance of the state apparatus. This is supported by an abundance of historical and contemporary evidence.

Mr. Chairman,

In many quarters public institutions have often been described as inefficient, ineffective and even corrupt. In similar vein, the behaviour of civil servants is often portrayed as 'ritualistic', blindly sticking to rules rather than making decisions required for timely action.

While there may be situations in which such criticisms are justified, this is certainly not the whole picture. There are myriads of public institutions that have served as outstanding pillars of development in both the developing and developed world and many civil servants who are 'above reproach' in their conduct.

It is ironic that the term 'bureaucracy' has become synonymous with inefficiency while Max Weber in his 'ideal-type' construct saw this form of organization as supremely efficient (although he regarded its triumph in modern society with some foreboding).

Many governments have introduced processes of reform in the public sector in response to the new global challenges, the results of in-depth and extensive evaluations of the operations of public sector institutions and the rising expectations of citizens, attributable in large measure to increasingly active and vocal civil society groups.

The government of Jamaica, for example, guided by the principle of the right of each citizen to security, justice and equal access to service and information, has since the early 1990's accelerated action on a number of programmes aimed at reforming the public sector. These have included the Financial Management Information System (FMIS) the Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS), Tax Administration Reform, the introduction of new procurement and contracting requirements, corporate planning and performance budgeting, Citizens Charter Programme to raise the standard of service in the public sector, Local Government Reform, the passing of the Access to Information Act, and very importantly, Reform of the Social Safety Net and improving the capability of government for social policy analysis to guide decision making. Measures related to the latter include the publication of an annual Survey of Living Conditions Report since 1989, which looks at social indicators, such as education and health status and tracks the level of poverty.

The overall focus of the reform has been on improved accountability, transparency and increased access to better quality service, while the underlying objective has been to strengthen and position the public sector to respond positively and effectively to local needs and changes in the global environment.

The most recent initiative is the "The Public Sector Modernization Vision Strategy 2002-2012" tabled in parliament in September 2002. It incorporates views from the public and private sectors, NGO's, media, communities, youth organizations, the elderly and disabled community. This broad consultative process was to foster a shared vision for reform. The stated vision is to ***"create a public service, which puts the public interest first and in which valued and respected professionals deliver high quality services efficiently and effectively"***. The reform process is outlined under eight thematic areas:

1. Sustainable National development
2. Governance
3. Values and Principles and the regeneration of the public service
4. Customer service
5. Resource Management and Accountability
6. Managing People
7. Performance
8. Technology

In the words of the head of the Public Sector Reform Unit **"The hopes, dreams and aspirations of Jamaicans for a better quality of life provide the basis of the reform. People and their needs are at centre stage"**.

Mr. Chairman,

In spite of the national and global achievements that have been recorded in respect of improving the effectiveness of the public sector, many challenges remain. It is the task of the Commission for Social Development not only to have meaningful deliberations on the critical issues, but also to recommend concrete actions to support the way forward. The Report of the Secretary General, the presentations of the panel of experts and contributions to the general debate by government representatives as well as NGO's, have served to highlight a number of important areas where attention needs to be focussed: recognition of differences in approaches to reform; measures of public sector effectiveness; sources of financing for the public sector (especially measures to improve taxation regimes); modalities for service delivery and variations in the appropriateness of decentralisation, public-private partnership, and privatisation (or as proposed by one panellist Workers co-operatives) depending on the context; employees reward systems for public servants; and the promotion of social dialogue among other things.

In all our deliberations, it has been constantly reaffirmed that there are diverse country experiences and the type of policies and programmes adopted must therefore be suitable to local conditions. This however, does not negate the fact that there are broad guidelines such as equity, accessibility, quality, productivity, accountability and transparency that must be essential elements of any reform process. Nor does it preclude international cooperation and sharing of good practices which remain critical for the enhancement of the process of social development.

Mr. Chairman,

In the final analysis, the bottom line of government accounting and accountability should be the profit and progress of humanity as a whole.