



PERMANENT MISSION OF  
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

MRS. FAITH INNERARITY  
PERMANENT SECRETARY  
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, CULTURE,  
YOUTH AND SPORTS

TO THE

47<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

ON

AGENDA ITEM 3 (A):  
PRIORITY THEME: SOCIAL INTEGRATION

UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK  
5<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2009

*Please check against delivery*

Madam Chairperson

Jamaica aligns itself with the statement made by Sudan on behalf of the G77 and China. The Summit for Social Development resulted in considerable international focus on the conceptual framework of social integration and the appropriate strategies to foster greater inclusion in societies in all regions of the world. However, more than a century before, the classical sociologist Emile Durkheim in his seminal work on the *Division of Labour in Society* developed the constructs “mechanical” and “organic” solidarity to illustrate the vital importance of social cohesion in the proper functioning of society. The defining feature of these two constructs was the contrast between social cohesion based on homogeneity and social cohesion which flowed from diversity and interdependence. Within the current context of globalization this interdependence goes beyond the borders of local communities and nation states to the world at large, as reflected in the present economic crisis which had its genesis in the most developed economies and now affects the prospects and social fabric of countries at all levels of development.

The G77 statement highlighted many of the concerns of developing countries central to our achievement of the goal of a “society for all”. Similarly, Mexico speaking for the Member States of the Rio Group pointed to the challenge posed by persistent and systemic inequalities in the Latin American and Caribbean region which impinge on the attainment of more equitable, just and inclusive societies. The vigorous panel debate yesterday also served to sharpen our focus on a range of issues relevant to both developed and developing countries in their quest to promote social integration.

Much of what has already been said is relevant to Jamaica. The goal of social integration is embedded in our national motto “out of many one people” which is reflective of the social and cultural pluralism which exist in the context of a post-colonial society. However, there have been major challenges as successive administrations have implemented policies and programmes to create opportunities, to reduce inequalities and ensure a better quality of life for all citizens.

The administration which took office in September 2007, had revitalization of the economy and creation more jobs as top priorities. Shortly after taking office, these central pillars of its policy have come under severe pressure, first from the food and energy crisis and now the precarious global financial and economic situation which has resulted in a downturn in demand in the world market for certain commodities, thereby threatening job losses in some of the most vital sectors of the economy such as the mining of bauxite.

Among the grave potential consequences of the prevailing macro-economic scenario is the risk of further marginalization of families below the poverty line coupled with the increasing trend of breakdown in the family unit and the associated potential for social instability and crime in impoverished inner-city communities, particularly among poorly educated and unemployed young men who join the ranks of the “lumpen proletariat”.

Many social problems, especially among the youth population, revolve around inadequate educational opportunities and limited scholastic attainment. This results in low levels of employment and increased frustration and anger. There is undoubtedly a link with poverty, the deterioration in community social infrastructure and the high levels of conflict within communities. There is therefore an urgent need to address these situations in urban poor as well as rural communities. If not strategically managed, it will undermine all other attempts of development within communities and nation states as a whole.

Where youths are not actively engaged physically and mentally there is a greater possibility for them to become involved in unproductive lifestyles. For example the crime statistics for Jamaica indicate that the 16 – 25 age group account for 49.4% of all major crimes, with males representing 98.7% of those arrested. In many countries unattached young men are often associated with street level violence, crime, the drug trade and substance abuse.

Although the national unemployment rate in Jamaica is 11%, statistics have shown that unemployment among the youth is 31%. More importantly, over 50% of the total unemployed fall within the 14 - 25 age group.<sup>1</sup> Educational attainment and quality of training influence productivity, future job opportunities, earning power and the contribution of the individual to society. Such opportunities are critical for both young men and women.

The large number of young men in Jamaica who have not attained the necessary qualifications to move on to further studies or to acquire skills training, have limited access to employment opportunities which further hinders their social mobility. On the other hand, females, although at an educational advantage in that they outnumber the males in regards to matriculation for tertiary institutions (67.1%)<sup>2</sup> and the attainment of post-secondary education and training (55.8%)<sup>3</sup>, are still at risk. Young women particularly those residing in rural agricultural and inner city communities are oftentimes lured into at-risk behaviour as a result of limited access to employment prospects due to a lack of marketable skills.

A recently conducted “ CARICOM Youth Dreams” research Project confirmed that these issues impact young people throughout the region, though the level of severity varies among member states.

Madam Chairperson,

Unemployment and poverty, including the lack of access to adequate education and other basic social services, are among the major contributors to social exclusion and disharmony in society as borne out in the analysis of the link between social integration, poverty eradication, full employment and decent work for all, contained in the Report of

---

<sup>1</sup> Economic and Social Survey Jamaica, PIOJ, 21.6

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 22.19

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 22.16

the Secretary-General, E/CN.5/2009/2, on Social Integration, which is before the Commission. These issues must be given priority attention if the social integration goals agreed on in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action are to be realized.

Without the development of effective strategies and interventions, the cycle of economic dependency, deprivation and limited formal education is likely to remain for young people and their families. Against this background, included among the priority policies and programmes of the Government of Jamaica are the following.

1. Renewed emphasis on the Education and Social Transformation Programme, including gender-appropriate measures to stem the pervasive underachievement of boys and reduce the drop-out rate of girls related to teenage pregnancies.
2. Strengthening of the Social protection System, including expanded social assistance for poor household to facilitate children remaining in school especially at the secondary level.
3. Conducting a review of the National Youth Policy to ensure that it is informed by prevailing conditions and provides an effective framework to create opportunities, promote and enhance youth participation in all spheres of society and improve the lives of all young people, thereby enhancing their contribution to National Development.
4. Implementation of a Youth Employment Network (JYEN) through a public private sector partnership under the auspices of the Jamaica Employers Federation.
5. Launching of a major skills training programme by the Labour Ministry in collaboration with relevant training institutions and national youth programmes.
6. Expansion of Youth Information Centres and other facilities and programmes to meet the social and cultural needs of young people and support their holistic development.

The use of Sport as a tool for peace and development particularly among the youth in deprived communities is an area of policy that has been accorded heightened and renewed focus in light of the outstanding performance of Jamaica's Athletes in the Beijing Olympics, including young persons with inner-city backgrounds. The entire nation coalesced and galvanized around the Beijing achievements. In addition in September 2008 Jamaica hosted a very successful UNESCO Sports for Peace and Development Conference.

Culture and entertainment policies which foster positive values among the youth are currently also other major areas of emphasis for Government. Jamaica has a rich history that is expressed by its people through the visual and performing arts. Historically, these art forms have been used not only as a means of entertainment, but more importantly, as tools for social change and upliftment. Our cultural expressions not only tell our story; they provide a means of expressing societal hardships and frustration, and put forward

answers to the challenges faced by our citizens in their quest for inclusion and upward mobility.

Madam Chairperson,

The use of the media to convey messages and information in an effort to better equip people to overcome exclusion and improve their socio-economic position cannot be underestimated. Now more than ever, in light of recent technological advancements, it is possible to target specific groups within the wider community to ensure that messages crucial to their social development are not only received, but are communicated in a way to which they will be receptive. Along with radio and newspapers, increased access to cable television and the internet for news and entertainment has opened a whole set of possibilities for Public Broadcasting which can be used to counter negative forces which impede the process of social integration.

Madam Chairperson,

While the global economic crisis limits the ability to invest in social development programmes, including those which benefit vulnerable individuals and groups, the Jamaican Government remains committed to sustaining the critical initiatives outlined.

Thank you

