**CLOSING STATEMENT BY JAMAICA**

**TO THE THIRD CYCLE OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF THE**

**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**Delivered by**

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE KAMINA JOHNSON SMITH**

**MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FORIGN TRADE OF JAMAICA**

**11th NOVEMBER 2020**

**Thank you, Mr. Vice-President**

Mr. Vice-President

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of Jamaica remains resolute in its commitment to promoting and upholding respect for human rights which it believes to be universal, inalienable, indivisible and interdependent, in adherence to its constitutional, regional and international obligations and in accordance with the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

Jamaica has made significant strides in implementing the accepted recommendations from the previous two cycles of the Universal Periodic Review and continues to actively undertake measures to bolster existing mechanisms for the protection and advancement of the rights of every citizen, especially the most vulnerable, at all levels of the Jamaican society.

In this vein, I wish to underscore the progress reported by the Government in, inter alia, combatting issues such as gender-based violence, the trafficking in persons, including women and children; ongoing measures to strengthen existing oversight and accountability mechanisms, as well as the administration of justice; enhancing access for, the provision of support services and the protection of women, children and persons with disabilities, including the mentally disabled; enhancing women’s participation in the political process and corporate management; implementation of strategies geared towards poverty reduction, lowering unemployment and boosting economic growth and environmental sustainability. It is to be noted that these are in keeping with our development priorities as outlined in Vision 2030 Jamaica and the Sustainable Development Goals, with human rights at their core.

We continue to strive vigorously, to ensure the full promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Jamaicans and migrants, without distinction, in keeping with the provisions of the Constitution of Jamaica. In that regard and as evidenced in the National Report as well as my previous presentations to this Working Group, the Government of Jamaica has been tireless in its efforts to further strengthen the legal, policy and institutional architecture at the national level.

While much has been accomplished, the Government of Jamaica acknowledges that much more will need to be done to further build on the strong foundations which have been laid to progressively address existing gaps. We recognize that it is a process and that it requires perseverance. Numerous challenges remain given that Jamaica, as a Small Island Developing State, faces significant human and other resources constraints. The negative and far-reaching impacts of the current COVID-19 pandemic have served to further compound these challenges. Like other countries, Jamaica has been particularly hard-hit by the crisis with the economy now grappling with the challenges of reduced revenues, increased health and social expenditures, a reversal of debt reduction targets and an ongoing climate crisis, which threatens to undo years of hard-won development gains.

Nevertheless, the Government of Jamaica stands ready and unwavering in its resolve to fulfil its obligations and to continue its cooperation with the UN human rights mechanisms, including treaty bodies, as well as with its regional and bilateral partners in the field of human rights. In addition, we will also be facilitating ongoing engagement with civil society and other relevant stakeholders, including through the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights (IMCHR) led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, in response to the various recommendations.

Mr. Vice-President,

In closing, I must express our gratitude, on behalf of the Government of Jamaica and my delegation, to all participating delegations for their active and constructive engagement in this the Third Universal Periodic Review of Jamaica. Bearing in mind Jamaica’s firm commitment to the promotion of human rights, the Government of Jamaica welcomed the process.

We have noted the increase in the number of recommending States from 64 at our last review, to [72] at this session. We have listened keenly and have taken careful note of your comments, questions and recommendations. The Government will be reflecting further on these in consultation with relevant stakeholders, as we continue to work towards improving the human rights framework at the national level and by extension, the quality of life of all Jamaicans.

I also thank the distinguished members of the Troika, the Republic of Fiji, the Republic of Venezuela and the Republic of Angola. Further, our sincere appreciation goes to the UPR and OHCHR Secretariats for their contribution to the process, thus far. Madame President, I also commend you, for the way in which you so ably guided our Session today.

Mr. Vice-President,

Distinguished Delegations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you all.