STATEMENT BY
JAMAICA
TO THE
2ND REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT
ON
AGENDA ITEM 6: NATIONAL EXPERIENCES REGARDING THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MONTEVIDEO CONSENSUS ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO
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Introduction

Mr. Chairman

My delegation extends heartiest congratulations to ECLAC, UNFPA and the Government of Mexico for hosting the 2nd Regional Conference on Population and Development and gives full support to facilitating successful outcomes, as we examine the Operational guide for the implementation and follow-up of the Montevideo Consensus within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Jamaica's population and development programme over the past twenty (20) years has been framed by the principles, goals and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action. Today, we are expressing our strong commitment and reaffirmation of these principles, as we move to achieve sustainable development within the context of Agenda 2030.

While Jamaica has seen many achievements in its population and development programme, several challenges remain. These challenges are primarily triggered by the particular vulnerabilities and external economic shocks that countries of the Caribbean sub-region face as small island developing states. These vulnerabilities including the impact of natural disasters, the negative effects of climate change, and high levels of indebtedness, have constrained our efforts towards sustainable development.
Notwithstanding, Jamaica has over the years, learnt many valuable lessons, in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. These experiences have formed the basis of the initial stages of our implementation of the Montevideo Consensus for the period 2013-2015.

An important thrust of the Montevideo Consensus is the establishment of a “permanent institutional structure devoted to population and development issues”. Jamaica, as early as the 1990s revised our national Population Policy and developed a National Programme of Action on Population and Development in 1995 consistent with the principles and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action. Through this approach, monitoring of the ICPD Programme of Action was institutionalized into our existing framework. This framework continues to be an effective structure in the Planning Institute of Jamaica for population and development issues.

In line with the policy framework thrust of the Montevideo Consensus, Jamaica has scheduled for the next 5 years, the revision and formulation of several critical policies and strategies to address the changing demographics of the country. These include:

- Revision of the National Population Policy
- Revision of the National Youth Policy
- Revision of the National Policy for Senior Citizens
- Finalization of the National Policy on International Migration and Development
Draft Diaspora Policy

- Formulation of the National Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Revision of the National Policy on Poverty Reduction and a Programme of Action
- Formulation of a comprehensive Social Protection Strategy.

Adoption of the National Disabilities Bill

The revision of the National Population Policy will be done within the context of the provisions of Montevideo Consensus, the sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030 and Vision 2030 Jamaica - National Development Plan. This will reflect the linkage between population and development.

The Planning Institute of Jamaica in its role as lead government agency on policy advice and formulation has consistently placed the issues of population ageing and social protection on the national agenda. Several reforms and initiatives have been in train since 2013 to address the potential challenges and opportunities that are presented by these issues.

A comprehensive national Social Protection Strategy, the first for the country was approved in 2014. As part of the strengthened policy framework in this area, the National Policy for Senior Citizens will be revised in 2016, bearing in mind the national and global dynamics of the ageing phenomenon. A Labour Market Reform Commission has also been established to provide recommendations for the modernization of the labour market in areas of education, training, productivity and social protection.
Significant work and dissemination of data and information on the ageing of the population and its impact on families, older persons, social and economic development has been done. Research on older persons by the University of the West Indies, Mona campus, was completed in 2014, as well as the production of an ageing module of the 2012 Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions. These sources have provided key national level statistics on the population in various thematic areas. There are in fact several indicators mentioned in the Operational Guide for which the country would have appropriate data to track.

Mr Chairman, prior to Cairo, Jamaica had a fairly successful family planning, maternal and child health and sexually transmitted infection programme. The major problem was that these programmes were not fully integrated at all levels of the primary health care system. Today, Jamaica is pleased to report that we have established a mechanism for integrating elements of the HIV/AIDS Programme into the National Family Planning Board programme as one of the responses to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health with support from UNFPA and UNAIDS.

Jamaica has made significant strides over the years in reducing its total fertility rate from 6.0 children per woman in the 1970s to approximately 2.4 children at present; however, adolescent fertility remains a challenge. There is considerable work to be done as we tackle adolescent pregnancy and also
their sexual and reproductive health issues. In 2013, the Ministry of Education unveiled the Policy on Reintegration of teenage mothers in the formal education system. This is to ensure that all teenage mothers are able to return to the formal education system and encouraged to pursue their academic goals and break the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

In regards to adolescent health, we have made definitive steps to advocate, through policies and programmes for the administration of sexual and reproductive health service, treatment, counselling and care to minors. There is also the establishment of adolescent-friendly centres; multi-sectoral support for the National Strategic Plan for Pre-Adolescents and Adolescents; and the development of an Action Plan for standards of care.

The Montevideo Consensus generally outlines the commitment of the Government of Jamaica to the principle of gender equality. This commitment is evident in the adoption of the National Policy on Gender Equality (2011). Key activities of the National Policy for Gender Equality are currently being implemented by, the Bureau of Women’s Affairs (BWA), which has full responsibility for gender issues and the monitoring of global commitments towards gender mainstreaming. The BWA falls under the Office of the Prime Minister which is indicative of the commitment of the government to address gender issues at the highest level. Within our national context, gender issues relate to both males and females. While we recognize there are specific issues relating to women and girls, we are conscious that there are also issues of concern for our male population.
As at December 2014 a total of 106 Gender Focal Points from 72 MDAs were trained, and are currently implementing Gender Action Plans.

Jamaica has adopted the policy position that international migration can benefit country of origin, country of destination and the migrants themselves. In light of this, we have developed a comprehensive and integrated national policy on international migration and development and a Draft Diaspora Policy is being formulated. The overall Policy Goal is to ensure that “International migration is adequately measured, monitored and streamlined to serve national development goals embodied in Vision 2030 Jamaica”.

Mr. Chairman, historically, our population and development programme was to a large extent funded and guided by international development partners including the UNFPA, USAID, UNICEF, World Bank and others. As the country evolved from low to middle to high middle income status over the period, the IDPs progressively reduced and/or totally shifted resources away from the country and from the population and development programmes. This has effectively placed the country in a precarious position to maintain and even to continue existing programmes. The pace of withdrawal of funding has been too fast for the government to make the necessary adjustments to ensure viability and sustainability.
The reliance on a few globally agreed indicators by most IDPs for funding commitments often ignored the weight of other critical constraints. In our case, we are classified as one of the most highly indebted countries in the world. Coupled with the high debt repayment burden, we are vulnerable to almost continuous external shocks from weather events and global economic conditions. These situations have placed severe constraints on the government to find the fiscal space to fund adequately the national population and development programme.

Effective implementation of the Montevideo Consensus requires a commitment to funding in a region where vulnerabilities are many and can severely hamper any efforts towards achieving sustainable development. Therefore we wish emphasis to be placed by the global community on the need for continued technical and financial support to population and development programmes at the regional and national levels. Jamaica wishes to place on record, our appreciation for the work being done by the UNFPA Sub-regional Office and strongly urge that continued and increased resources be provided to that office for sustainability of the work being done in the Caribbean sub-region.

**Conclusion**

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, Jamaica intends to continue its progress in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the Montevideo Consensus. We intend to advance our work on the following areas:
• Continuing focus on reduction in fertility among adolescents and youth as a strategy to break the inter-generational transmission of poverty
• Concerted efforts in addressing infant, child and maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS and chronic non-communicable diseases
• Ensuring the integration of population ageing in all development policies, plans and programmes
• Greater efforts at incorporating population growth and distribution in urbanization and climate change policies and planning, in pursuit of achieving a healthy environment
• Greater focus on the role of international migration and the Diaspora in national development
• Ensuring that human rights and gender equality issues are integrated into all policies, plans, programmes and projects and
• Greater focus on collection, management and dissemination of quality data.

We anticipate that, through the sharing of experiences in fora such as this, adoption of an effective Operational Guide of the Montevideo Consensus and working within the context of Agenda 2030, there will be continued support for our national efforts, which seek to place our people at the centre of the development process, thereby ensuring that no one is left behind.

Thank you