

**NATIONAL STATEMENT OF THE JAMAICAN DELEGATION  
TO  
2<sup>ND</sup> MINISTERIAL REVIEW CONFERENCE ON THE GENEVA DECLARATION ON ARMED VIOLENCE  
AND DEVELOPMENT**

**GENEVA  
OCTOBER 31 NOVEMBER 1 - 2011**

Mr. Chairman, Esteemed Ministers and delegates

Jamaica is quite honoured to be allowed to make a statement at this important conference. The issues discussed are of great relevance to us and our future development.

Mr. Chairman,

Jamaica has had sustained homicide rates of over 20 incidents per 100000 population for more than 20 consecutive years. It has been noted elsewhere that Jamaica is one of only three countries since World War 11 that have had that distinction – Colombia, South Africa, Jamaica-<sup>1</sup> and as a result has been tagged with the label of being a “High Violence Society”<sup>2</sup>.

The seemingly intractable problem of violent crime reached a high in 2009 when the homicide rates were recorded at 62/100,000 – placing Jamaica among the top three countries worldwide.

Young men in urban communities bear the brunt of the violence. Males age 20-24 have the highest victimization rates, followed by young adult males up to age 29. These statements are supported by hospital injury reports and victimization data. According to the most recent statistics, males account for 80% of all hospital admissions for violence-related injuries, and over two-thirds are under the age of 30.<sup>3</sup>

Firearms continue to be the weapon of choice with approximately 77% of all homicides involving the use of a firearm.

In response, the Government of Jamaica is implementing long term measures that include:

- Reform and modernization of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), emphasizing among other things Community Policing and Anti- Corruption programmes

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<sup>1</sup> See Anthony Harriott, *Bending the Trend Line the Challenge of Controlling Violence in Jamaica and the High Violence Societies of the Caribbean*. (Dept. Of Government University of the West Indies Mona and the Institute of Criminal Justice and Security University of the West Indies 2008)

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> Jamaica Injury Surveillance System: Injury Report, 2005.

- Increasing the technical capabilities of the JCF to enhance crime investigation and prosecutions
- Expansion of the size of the JCF
- Expanded social intervention programmes focused on youth at risk
- Legislation to improve our management of small arms and our abilities to disrupt gangs and other organized criminal networks

Since mid – 2010 the Government of Jamaica has implemented a number of new policy initiatives and the security forces have upgraded their operations especially over the past eighteen months. These increased efforts by the police to target criminal gangs, and more effective inter-agency coordination for violence prevention is bearing fruit. The homicide rate in 2010 reduced to 52/100,000 and figures for 2011 so far show a 40% reduction in homicides compared to the corresponding period 2009-2010. The situation though remains volatile and the Government of Jamaica requires concerted international support to capitalise on recent progress.

As part of it's over all crime reduction strategies the Government has developed a National Crime Prevention and Community Safety Strategy (NCPSS) which has been adopted by Cabinet. The primary vehicle for its implementation is the newly-established Community Renewal Programme (CRP) which is a platform for coordinating improved service delivery into the 100 most volatile and vulnerable communities in the country to reduce social exclusion, crime and violence.

As a reflection of the importance assigned to this initiative, an Inter-Ministerial National Crime Prevention and Community Renewal Committee chaired by the Prime Minister has been established, and coordinating structures at the local government level are being developed. There is a specific focus on at-risk children and youth (particularly young males) and their families, who are the main victims and perpetrators of violent crime and among the most excluded of populations from mainstream society.

The Government of Jamaica is already taking steps to implement the NCPSS and CRP: These include -:

- Developing an integrated crime and violence information system to enable data-driven policy development. A multi-agency technical committee is already meeting and cross validating data.
- Working with the United Nations Country Team to develop a local Armed Violence Prevention Project to support the implementation of the NCPSS and CRP.
- Development of Crime Prevention and Community Safety Committees at the local level led by Local Authorities and with the active participation of civil society and central government agencies

- Introduction of situational crime prevention measures (primarily CCTV) in sections of major townships
- Expanded Community Policing programmes island wide
- Development of new legislation to tackle organized criminal networks including an Anti – Gang Strategy
- Developing a national small arms and light weapons policy aimed at strengthening existing small arms controls, including improving its capacity to *trace* firearms used in crime and determine the sources of illicit firearms. Jamaica is also revising its firearms legislation, in part, to ensure that the country is implementing its existing commitments including the Programme of Action on Small Arms. This includes the introduction of *brokering* regulations as well as provisions on the *marking* of firearms. Jamaica has made progress in terms of identifying some of the weaknesses and gaps in its current small arms control regime, and in determining how these can be overcome. In this regard we are receiving some assistance from the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UnLIREC) to increase our capacities.

Mr. Chairman,

The Jamaican government is determined to press ahead with these initiatives and needless to say, many of the measures required to address the gaps and carry the national policies forward require resources and equipment. The next stage in the process is to identify partners who are in a position to collaborate with and assist Jamaica in implementing the policies that are being formulated, and help provide the resources and equipment required.

Specifically we are interested in assistance to:

- Strengthen institutional Capacities at the National and Local levels to address Crime & Violence and Community Renewal
- Reduce trafficking, possession and usage of small arms
- Prevent children and youth from becoming victims and perpetrators of crime
- Improve data capture and tracking of serious crime and of guns
- Improve identification and targeting of at risk populations in particular young men
- Support Community Policing
- Support local area crime prevention initiatives in particular Local Government awareness of its responsibilities and roles in this regard

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for allowing our participation in this very important conference.