

**Jamaica’s Statement for High-Level Panel 1: Mechanisms for the  
Advancement of Women and Gender Architecture in the State**  
**66<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on  
Women in Latin America and the Caribbean**

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**Santiago, Chile**

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**10: 00 a.m – 11:30 a.m. (Chile time)**

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**Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and  
the Regional Gender Agenda**

The Government of Jamaica (GoJ) remains committed to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Regional Gender Agenda. This is exemplified through strengthening of the institutional framework, as well as increased allocation of technical and human resources for the national machinery for gender equality, the Bureau of Gender Affairs (BGA). Specific strides include the enactment of gender-based violence legislation, implementation of national gender policies, strategies, plans, programmes and initiatives:

**Gender-based Violence (GBV) Legislation**

*The Sexual Harassment (Protection and Prevention) Act, 2021*

The Sexual Harassment (Protection and Prevention) Act, 2021 took effect on Monday, July 3, 2023. The Act intends to:

1. Provide protection to all persons who experience sexual harassment;
2. Ensure that environments for work, school and accommodations are free from sexual harassment;
3. Highlight the offensive nature of sexual harassment;
4. Establish the liability of the offending party and, where necessary, outline the liability of the accommodating parties.

In tandem with the operationalisation of the Act, the national machinery for gender equality, the Bureau of Gender Affairs (BGA) continues to provide sexual harassment public education and sensitization sessions to multiple publics, as well as spearhead the review of sexual harassment workplace policies for public and private sector organisations, as well as, other relevant stakeholders.

### Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act, 2023

The Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act, 2023 provides for the increased protection of victims/survivors of domestic violence and improved legal recourse relative to previous version of the legislation. The new amendments entail:

- Expansion of the category of persons allowed to apply for protection orders on behalf of the abused
- Expansion of the conduct or behaviours that the Court may prohibit the respondent from engaging in
- Widening of the threshold to be met in obtaining protection orders
- Increasing the penalty for breaching a protection order to a fine of one million dollars (\$1, 000, 000) or imprisonment for one (1) year

### **Policies, Plans, Programmes and Initiatives**

#### National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE)

The revision of the 2011 National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE) in 2021, builds on, updates and extends the previous version of the NPGE. The revised policy focuses on a smaller number of target areas identified by stakeholders, as persistent barriers to gender equality.

#### Implementation of the National Strategic Action Plan to Eliminate Gender- based Violence (NSAP-GBV) 2017- 2027

The National Strategic Action Plan to Eliminate Gender-Based Violence in Jamaica (NSAP-GBV) 2017- 2027 recognises that eliminating GBV requires change at all levels - from state systems and laws through to organizations such as schools, workplaces and support services, local communities, and individual relationships and behaviours. The NSAP-GBV's implementation is guided by five (5) strategic priority areas, *Prevention; Protection; Investigation, Prosecution and Enforcement of Court Orders; Enforcement of Victims' Rights to Compensation, Reparation and Redress; Protocols for Coordination of NSAP and Data Management Systems.*

#### The Gender and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (GCCSAP), 2022

The Gender and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (GCCSAP), 2022 was developed to inform the implementation of the GoJ's commitment to gender-responsive climate action. The GCCSAP is led by the Climate Change Division (CCD) in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation (MEGJC) and the Bureau of Gender Affairs in the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport (MCGES).

#### The National Strategy for Shelters and Other Safe Spaces for Survivors of GBV in Jamaica, 2023 and the Comprehensive Guidelines for the Operationalization of Gender-based Violence Helplines in Jamaica, 2023

The National Strategy for Shelters and other Safe Spaces for Survivors of GBV in Jamaica along with the accompanying Comprehensive Guidelines for the Operationalization of Gender-Based Violence Helplines in Jamaica were developed for

providers of safe spaces for survivors of GBV and operators of helplines to ensure that all internal operations and systems are in alignment with national policies, Jamaica's legal framework and international quality standards for GBV services. These documents emphasize prioritising the survivor-centred approach for both public and private entities and encourage the development of protocols and guidelines for their day-to-day management.

#### *The Gender Advisory Council (GAC)*

The Gender Advisory Council (GAC) was officially established with approval by Cabinet January 8, 2018 for an initial tenure to span a period of three (3) years with effect from January 8, 2018 to January 7, 2021. The GAC provides oversight for the implementation of the NSAP-GBV and the NPGE. The new members of the GAC were announced in 2023 and the first meeting was held in September 2023.

#### *The Continuum of Care, 2022*

The NSAP-GBV is being implemented using the "Continuum of Care" for Coordinated Delivery of Services to Survivors of Gender-based Violence. This "Continuum of Care" is built on the premise that GBV is best eliminated through strategic partnerships and collaboration to synchronize activities at the national, regional and local levels with government agencies, academia, the private sector, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), International Development Partners (IDPs) and other relevant groups. The "Continuum of Care" uses the survivor centered approach to ensure that survivors have access to appropriate and good quality services including health care; psychological and social support; security; legal services. Through the Continuum of Care, the BGA employs a multisectoral response model which includes holistic, inter-organizational, inter-agency, interdisciplinary efforts that promote participation and collaboration across key sectors that respond to GBV, including life-saving services to ensure seamless provision of services by all MDAs to survivors of GBV.

### **Establishment of New Units**

#### *The National Shelter Unit, 2020*

The National Shelter Unit is responsible for oversight of the state-run shelters for victims of GBV. The establishment of the shelters is in keeping with the NSAP-GBV. These shelters aim to provide a safe haven and psycho-social support to women and their children who are victims of GBV. To date, two (2) out of three (3) shelters are operational. The renovations for the third shelter are anticipated to be completed during the 2024/2025 financial year.

#### *The Sexual Harassment Investigation Unit, 2022*

To support the implementation of the Sexual Harassment (Protection and Prevention) Act, 2021, the Sexual Harassment Investigation Unit was established. This Unit is responsible for handling matters regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. The Unit is staffed with one (1) Senior Sexual Harassment Investigative Officer who supervises three (3) Sexual Harassment Investigative Officers who investigate sexual

harassment claims, sensitise persons on the Act, ensure compliance within institutions, raise awareness and provide support to the Sexual Harassment Tribunal.

#### *The Gender-based Violence Unit, 2023*

The GBV Helpline Unit was officially established in September 2023, to support victims, survivors, and witnesses of gender-based violence. The Unit is staffed with one (1) Director and three (4) Gender-based Violence Helpline Specialists, with an additional Gender-based Violence Helpline Specialist due to commence duties in short order. The Unit offers support services to the victims and survivors of GBV at the community and national level by providing psychosocial support; gender-based violence related information; counselling; assessing victims/survivors' needs and allowing space for safety planning. The GBV Helpline Unit is also one of the entry/referral points to the National Shelter Programme.

#### *The Male Empowerment Unit, 2023*

The Male Empowerment Unit was officially established in September 2023 and is staffed with one (1) Director, who supervises two (2) Male Empowerment Officers and an Administrative Assistant. The establishment of this Unit is in keeping with the policy imperative to more effectively engage men and boys in reflections about rigid gender norms, power relations, gender-based violence and other inequalities.

### **Challenges to the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

While significant achievements have been realised in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it is noted that further progress has been impeded due to a number of key challenges:

- Limited resources inclusive of lack of gender responsive budgeting which would aid in closing the gender gaps and provide the necessary resources to enhance the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data to inform legislation, policies, plans and programmes.
- Prevailing negative social norms and gender stereotypes that impact the achievement of gender equality, social justice and the socio-economic empowerment of women.
- Lack of widespread understanding about the importance of gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment.
- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

**Prepared by the Bureau of Gender Affairs**

**December 2, 2024**