



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement By

The **Honourable** Donald Buchanan,
Minister of State
in the Ministry of Finance and Planning of Jamaica

to the

Twenty-first Special Session **of** the United Nations
General Assembly for the Overall Review and Appraisal
of the Five-year Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action

New York

Thursday, 1999 July 01

Please Check against Delivery

INTRODUCTION

MR. PRESIDENT, THE **INTERNATIONAL** CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT WAS A MILESTONE FOR GLOBAL POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT **INITIATIVES**, AND SET THE GLOBAL FRAMEWORK FOR **CO-OPERATION IN THIS** AREA. THIS REVIEW IS TIMELY AS IT ALLOWS US, FIVE YEARS HENCE, TO EXAMINE THE EXTENT TO WHICH WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED THE CAIRO PROGRAMME AND TO CHART OUR FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION WHILE SHARING **IN** AND LEARNING FROM EACH OTHERS NATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

MR. PRESIDENT, THE CENTRAL THEME OF THIS REVIEW - THAT **POPULATION** CONCERNS ARE AN INDISPENSABLE PART OF NATIONAL AND **INTERNATIONAL** EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE, SUSTAINED DEVELOPMENT - IS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT TO SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES SUCH AS JAMAICA AND MUCH OF THE CARIBBEAN. IN VIEW OF THIS, THE MUTUALLY REINFORCING LINKS BETWEEN POPULATION GROWTH, POVERTY, ECONOMIC PROGRESS, ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS, AND UNSUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS BECOME STRONGER AND WITH MORE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES TO OUR COUNTRIES. DECISIVE ACTION AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS WILL DETERMINE WHETHER THESE CONSEQUENCES WILL BE EITHER A DOWNWARD SPIRAL OF INCREASED POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION OR, THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OUR PEOPLE.

THIS REVIEW MUST, THEREFORE, **INTER ALIA**:

- ***ENSURE THAT POPULATION STRATEGIES ARE GEARED TOWARDS ACHIEVING THE GOAL OF POVERTY ERADICATION;***
- ***ADDRESS THE LINKAGES BETWEEN ADOLESCENT FERTILITY AND THE PERPETUATION OF THE POVERTY CYCLE;***
- ***INCREASE CO-OPERATION FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IN THE AREA OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH;***
- ***INTENSIFY EFFORTS AND COMMITMENTS TO ADDRESSING THE AIDS PANDEMIC.***

THE PURPOSE OF THIS REVIEW, AS WE SEE IT, IS NOT TO REHASH OLD ISSUES, BUT TO WORK TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS IDENTIFIED IN THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION. HOPEFULLY, THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH HAVE ARISEN DURING THE PREPARATORY

PROCESS WILL, THROUGH INCREASED PUBLIC AWARENESS AND BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF POPULATION ISSUES, SERVE TO FACILITATE THE FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO **AGENDA**.

DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

MR. **PRESIDENT**, PROBABLY, THE MOST **OUTSTANDING** ACHIEVEMENT FOR JAMAICA SINCE CAIRO HAS BEEN IN THE AREA OF CAPACITY BUILDING, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO POLICY **AND** PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT. AS A **DIRECT** RESULT OF THE **ICPD**, JAMAICA REVISED ITS NATIONAL POPULATION POLICY AND FORMULATED A NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON POPULATION AND **DÉVELOPMENT**, CONSISTENT WITH THE CAIRO PROGRAMME OF ACTION. THIS INFLUENCED THE SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL POLICIES **AND** PROGRAMMES IN THE AREAS OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION, CHILDREN, YOUTH, SENIOR CITIZENS, AND POVERTY ERADICATION. THE THRUST TOWARDS POLICY DEVELOPMENT IS STILL PROCEEDING WITH PLANS TO FORMULATE POLICIES ON DISABILITY, INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION, **REPRODUCTIVE** HEALTH, INFORMATION, **EDUCATION**, COMMUNICATION **AND** ADVOCACY. NON-GOVERNMENTAL **ORGANIZATIONS** HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY INVOLVED AT AU LEVELS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES, AND HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THEIR MONITORING AND EVALUATION.

MR. **PRESIDENT**, MY GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZES THAT SEXUAL **ANDREPRODUCTIVE** HEALTH RESTS ON THE RECOGNITION OF THE BASIC RIGHTS OF AU COUPLES AND **INDIVIDUALS** TO **DECIDE** FREELY **AND** RESPONSIBLY, THE NUMBER, SPACING AND TIMING OF THEIR CHILDREN AND TO HAVE THE INFORMATION **AND** MEANS TO DO SO.

ONLY LAST YEAR, MR. **PRESIDENT**, WE WERE PLEASED THAT A **DISTINGUISHED** JAMAICAN, PROFESSOR HUGH WYNTER, CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING **BOARD**, RECEIVED THE 1998 **UNITED** NATIONS POPULATION AWARD IN RECOGNITION OF HIS INFLUENCE IN SHAPING THE PROVISION OF FAMILY PLANNING AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES IN THE CARIBBEAN OVER THE PAST FORTY YEARS. DUE TO THE EFFORTS OF THE NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING BOARD, AND COMMIT-I-ED INDIVIDUALS LIKE PROFESSOR WYNTER, JAMAICA **TODAY** ENJOYS MODERATELY LOW RATES OF POPULATION GROWTH, FERTILITY AND INFANT MORTALITY.

ADOLESCENT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

MR. PRESIDENT, IN 1960 THE TOTAL **FERTILITY** RATE WAS APPROXIMATELY 6.0 BIRTHS PER WOMAN. IN 1997, THIS RATE HAD FALLEN TO 2.8 BIRTHS PER WOMAN. DESPITE **THIS** ACHIEVEMENT, ADOLESCENT FERTILITY REMAINS A SERIOUS PROBLEM **IN** JAMAICA WHERE ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE PER CENT OF TOTAL BIRTHS ARE TO ADOLESCENTS 15 TO 19 YEARS OLD. CONTRACEPTIVE USE **AMONG** THEM IS LOW, **PUTTING** THEM AT EXTREME RISK OF BEING INFECTED BY SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES INCLUDING HIV/AIDS. **IN** FACT, THE RATE OF TRANSMISSION OF HIV **AMONG** THE YOUTH IS THE FASTEST OF ALL OTHER **AGE** GROUPS. THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE ARE INDEED OF GREAT CONCERN TO THE GOVERNMENT. ANOTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION NEEDS TO BE HIGHLIGHTED, MR. PRESIDENT. POVERTY IS PRINCIPALLY A YOUTH PHENOMENON IN JAMAICA. ONE OF **ITS** **MAJOR** ROUTES OF TRANSMISSION BETWEEN GENERATIONS IS THROUGH EARLY CHILD-BEARING RESULTING IN, AMONG OTHER THINGS, DISCONTINUED EDUCATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT. BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY IS COTERMINOUS WITH THE EMPOWERMENT OF OUR WOMEN.

INITIATIVES BY GOVERNMENT, WITH ASSISTANCE FROM UNFPA AND **USAID**, TARGETING ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH IN SELECTED COMMUNITIES ISLANDWIDE HAVE SHOWN **POSITIVE** BUT STILL LIMITED RESULTS. THE TASK AHEAD REQUIRES A MUCH MORE COMPREHENSIVE, MULTI-PRONGED AND INTEGRATED APPROACH TO SYSTEMATICALLY ADDRESS THE COMPLEX AND INTER-RELATED NEEDS OF ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH. WE NEED TO MAKE A BETTER IMPACT ON THIS **AGE GROUP** THROUGH HEALTH AND FAMILY LIFE **EDUCATION CHANNELLING INFORMATION** THROUGH THE FAMILY, AS WELL AS SOCIAL CLUBS, YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES INVOLVED IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.

DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENTS

MR. PRESIDENT, JAMAICA CONTINUES TO MAKE NOTABLE PROGRESS SINCE CAIRO IN ITS **TRANSITION** TO LOW BIRTH AND DEATH RATES. THE CRUDE BIRTH AND THE CRUDE DEATH RATES ARE SLIGHTLY LOWER THAN THOSE OF 1994, WHILE THE ACTUAL POPULATION GROWTH RATE OF 1% IS LOWER THAN THE RATE OF NATURAL INCREASE OF 1.72%. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO RATES WAS DUE TO THE RELATIVELY HIGH LEVEL OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION. BASED ON THESE AND OTHER **CHANGES**.

JAMAICA HAS BEEN EXPERIENCING A MODERATELY RAPID PROCESS OF AGEING. THE MOST NOTICEABLE FEATURE HAS BEEN A DECLINE IN THE **PROPORTION** OF CHILDREN 0 TO 14 YEARS AND A SIGNIFICANT EXPANSION OF THOSE IN THE **REPRODUCTIVE, LABOUR FORCE** AND RETIREMENT AGES. IN RECOGNITION OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE CHANGES FOR CONTINUING POPULATION GROWTH, REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, JOB CREATION, WELFARE **AND** POVERTY ERADICATION PROGRAMMES, THE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO INCLUDING THESE AREAS IN POPULATION PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION. COUPLED WITH THESE CHANGES ARE ALSO THE CONTINUING HIGH LEVELS OF INTERNAL POPULATION REDISTRIBUTION AND URBANIZATION RESULTING IN UNDESIRABLE CONCENTRATION OF POPULATION AND THE PROLIFERATION OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS **AND ACTIVITIES** AND THEIR ATTENDANT SOCIAL, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES IN OUR MAJOR URBAN AREAS. THESE WE WILL CONTINUE TO ADDRESS.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

MR. PRESIDENT, AS A SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATE OUR **VULNERABILITIES** LIE NOT ONLY IN OUR SUSCEPTIBILITY TO NATURAL DISASTERS BUT ALSO TO EXTERNAL MACRO-ECONOMIC FACTORS. FOR NEARLY TWO DECADES WE HAVE PURSUED STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT **AND LIBERALISATION** POLICIES WHICH HAVE SEVERELY CONSTRAINED OUR NATIONAL BUDGET, **AND** HAVE SERIOUSLY **REDUCED** ALLOCATIONS TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES **INCLUDING** THOSE IN THE AREA OF POPULATION. SOME CRITICAL PROGRAMMES HAVE HAD TO BEEN **SCALED DOWN** OR PLACED ON HOLD. IN ADDITION, RECENT FINANCIAL CRISES COUPLED WITH THE **VULNERABILITIES AND** THE CONSTRAINTS FACED BY OUR LOCAL **PRODUCTION AND** MARKETING SYSTEMS **IN** COMPETING IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETS HAVE ALSO **SERVED** TO LIMIT THE NATIONAL BUDGET. OUR EXTERNAL DEBT **BURDEN** HAS ESCALATED ALMOST BEYOND CONTROL OVER THE SAME **PERIOD**. TODAY OVER 60 CENTS IN EVERY DOLLAR IN THE NATIONAL BUDGET GO **TOWARDS DEBT** REPAYMENT. OF THE **REMAINDER**, OVER 80 PER CENT GOES TOWARDS MEETING RECURRENT EXPENSES. THE LOGIC OF THE SCENARIO FOR DEVELOPMENT IS **SELF-EVIDENT**.

INDICATIONS ARE THAT RELATED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR FERTILITY, LIFE EXPECTANCY, PRIMARY HEALTH CARE, REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, **EDUCATION**, AND POVERTY **ERADICATION** MAY NOT BE **ACHIEVED** WITHIN THE DESIRED TIME FRAME.

MR. PRESIDENT, DIRECT **AID** ALONE WILL NOT **PROVIDE** A LASTING SOLUTION TO RECIPIENT COUNTRIES' DEVELOPMENT NEEDS. IT WILL ALSO BE NECESSARY TO REFORM INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC **AND** FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TO PROMOTE EQUITABLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY IN THE AREA OF TRADE TO AVOID **DEPENDENCE** ON AID.

WE NOTE WITH SPECIAL INTEREST RECENT STEPS BY THE GROUP OF 7 AND SOME **INDIVIDUAL** COUNTRIES TO RECONSIDER STRATEGIES AND TO TAKE TANGIBLE STEPS TO ALLEVIATE THE **DEBT BURDEN**, PARTICULARLY ON THE MOST VULNERABLE.

MR. PRESIDENT,

AS EARLIER SPEAKERS HAVE **NOTED**, DEVELOPING COUNTRIES LIKE JAMAICA HAVE **DEMONSTRATED** THEIR COMMITMENT TO IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION BY FORMULATING NEW, OR REVISING EXISTING NATIONAL POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN LINE WITH **ICPD** GOALS, AND HAVE ALREADY ALLOCATED SCARCE RESOURCES TO FULFIL THEIR COMMITMENTS. THE REALITY IS THAT THE RESOURCE GOALS IN THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION ARE STILL ELUSIVE.

FINALLY, MR. PRESIDENT, JAMAICA WISHES, IN THIS FORUM, TO **FULLY** RECOMMIT HERSELF TO THE GOALS **AND** OBJECTIVES ENSHRINED IN THE CAIRO PROGRAMME OF ACTION AS WE **CONSIDER** THAT IN THE ATTAINMENT OF THESE GOALS WE WILL ENSURE A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OUR PEOPLE **AND** FOR GENERATIONS YET TO COME.

THANK YOU.