



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT BY

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**AT
REVIEW BY THE CEDAW OF JAMAICA'S
FIFTH PERIODIC REPORT**

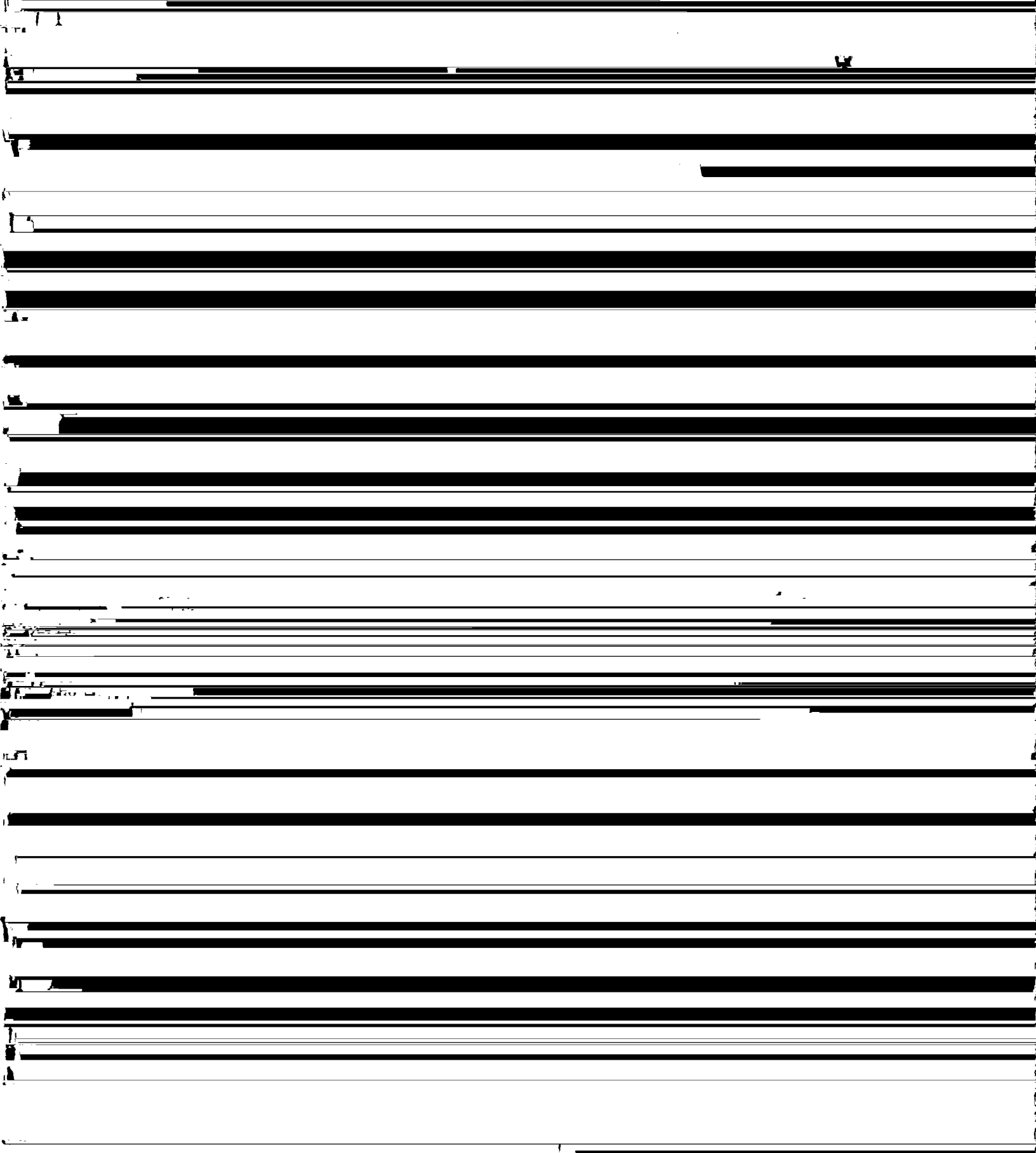
**DURING THE
36TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE
ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN**

Introduction

Madam Chairperson distinguished Members of the Committee:

It is a special honour for me to be invited to appear before you today.

the impetus to act more decisively to address such issues, as they occur. In this regard, stakeholders have been engaging in an on-going dialogue around short and medium term actions related to lobbying or legislation in



debate and recommendations. This procedure serves to bring to public attention proposed changes to the law and to provide an opportunity for the participation of special interest groups and members of the public in the formulation of such legislation.

The proposed **Charter of Rights and Freedoms** (Constitutional Amendment) Bill has suffered this fate. This amendment of the Constitution to prohibit discrimination on the ground of sex is part of the package of amendments proposed in Bill C-75.

matter of outstanding Regulations under the Act as well as the establishment of the

The Property (Rights of Spouses) Act, 2004 introduced new statutory rules to provide for the equitable division of assets between spouses upon marriage or relationship breakdown. This Act, though gender neutral in its provisions, should be beneficial to women in its practical application, as the deficiencies under the old law which placed women at a disadvantage in proving entitlement to property have been removed.

The Maintenance Act, 2005 repealed and replaced the old Maintenance Act and the Affiliation Act and makes comprehensive provisions for maintenance within the family.

Implementing legislation is being prepared and there is already a first draft of the Bill

(The Domestic Violence Bill, 2004)

under consideration. The draft Bill provides a comprehensive definition of trafficking which is in keeping with the provisions of the Convention and related Protocol. This will remedy the deficiency of the absence of a definition of the offence in the existing law.

Madam Chair, legislation is also being developed to address the more recent problem of cyber crime and child pornography.

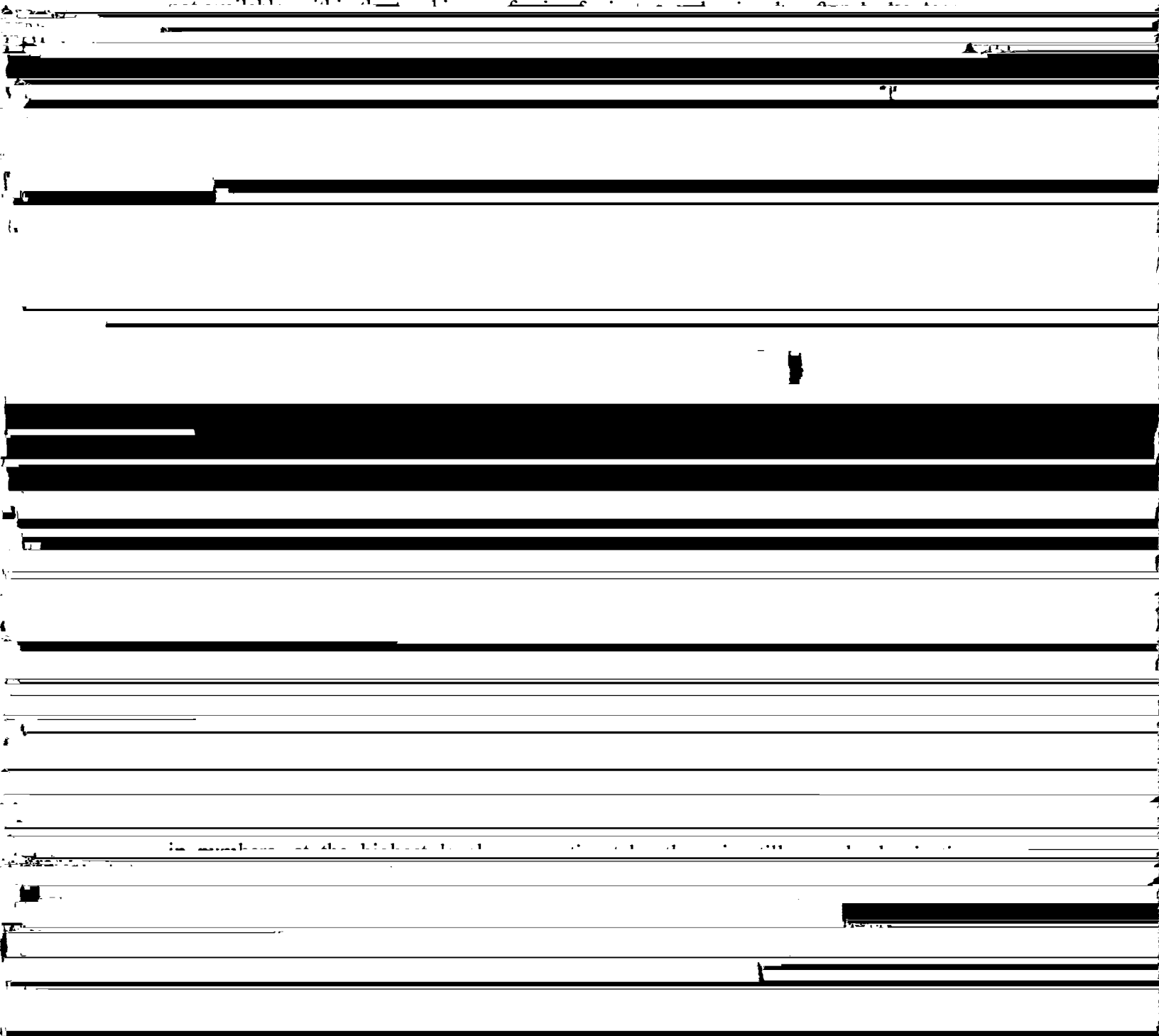
On the subject of Sexual Harassment a CARICOM Model Bill is being used to generate national debate on the nature and content of legislation on the subject. The Bureau of Women's Affairs is spearheading the consultative process leading to the development of a national Sexual Harassment Policy, which will not only pave the way for the legislation, but also provide an interim measure to address the matter of sexual harassment.

Education and Employment

Madam Chair, I now turn to issues related to education and employment. In Jamaica, although Labour Force Participation Rates have been consistently lower for females, there has been a gradual decline in the gender gap, and, in 2004 the difference between male and female participation rates was 10.9% points. Although, overall, women represent the better prepared source of human capital, based largely on the dynamics of culture and socialization practices as well as structural barriers, they are not only under-represented in the labour market but are also clustered in the feminized occupations

produce distorted results. The Statistical Institute of Jamaica has plans to increase the survey sample size to facilitate this type of projection.

Although data on vertical segregation within all occupational categories were generally



Madam Chair, there are also special measures, which target adolescents, in the form of national policy guidelines governing the provision of contraceptive advice, counselling and treatment to such persons by health care professionals without the knowledge and consent of parents, if the individual so wishes. These guidelines apply to persons under

sixteen years of age since persons aged sixteen are, by law, deemed competent to consent to medical, surgical and dental treatment.

HIV/AIDS continues to be a growing concern in Jamaica, Madame Chair, particularly for female adolescents in the age group 15-19 years which have three (3) times higher risk of HIV infection than boys of the same age group. Public health authorities have been

presently target adolescent females in terms of their sexual and reproductive health.

Rural women

Madame Chair, rural women is an area of special concern on which the Committee sought detailed empirical data. The disaggregated, multivariate data requested are not readily available and indicates the need for greater attention to be given to the design of

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Mainstreaming Gender

is a significant strategy for achieving change at the structural level and therefore an essential tool for enhancing gender equality. In accordance with strategic objectives set out in the Beijing Platform of Action, gender mainstreaming efforts have been actively promoted in various Government ministries and agencies. A number of initiatives and programmes have been introduced and various levels of success achieved.

Various gender monitoring checklists have also been developed by some agencies but have not been used systematically. It is proposed that an evaluation be carried out in these institutions to ascertain the degree of usage and problems encountered in their application.

In addition to a clear political will there is also need for commitment at the institutional and individual levels to ensure successful implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies. A coordinated and structured approach, inclusive of monitoring and evaluation is therefore critical for the sustainability of these efforts. It is suggested that

To this end consideration is being given to the formation of a support group comprising persons with knowledge of the provisions of the CEDAW and an appreciation of the processes involved in the implementation of action required. The support role of this group would include assisting in the preparation of the periodic reports, and following up

Committee.

Madam Chair, I end by reiterating the Government of Jamaica's firm commitment to the CEDAW obligations and to the development of an informed strategic agenda of gender