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**WTO Aid for Trade Workshop  
on Economic Diversification and Empowerment  
with a focus on women and youth  
5 November 2018  
Geneva**

Mr. Chairman

Representatives of other Organizations

Colleagues

I am pleased to be participating in today's Aid for trade Workshop on the theme of Economic Diversification and Empowerment, with a particular focus on Women and Youth.

I wish to also commend the WTO Secretariat for organizing this event.

**Introduction**

Statistics show that empowering women to participate identically to men in the global economy would not only add \$28 trillion in GDP growth by 2025 but also have far-reaching socio-economic benefits including in poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, and innovation.

Just by advancing women's equality would add US\$12 trillion.

While the Latin American and Caribbean region has seen significant progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment in the past decade, less than 2 per cent of the companies in the region have a woman as CEO.

\*Further, in the MSME sector in LAC, which is largely populated by women, only one in five exporters is female.

### **Jamaica's profile**

In terms of Jamaica's specific profile, Gender equality, equity and women's economic empowerment are very high on the development agenda of the Government of Jamaica.

Women account for approximately 50.5 % of Jamaica's total population of 2.8 million; and 45.6 % of the workforce. (STATIN 2017).

- Jamaica is one of the leading countries, not only in the region, but also in the world when it comes to facilitating the empowerment and participation of women.

#### ***For example:***

- Over 59% of all Managerial posts in Jamaica are occupied by women
- This is why the World economic forum, in 2015, ranked Jamaica as the country with the highest number of women managers
- Currently our Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, our Permanent Secretary and most of our Heads of key Missions such as those in Brussels, Washington DC, Ottawa, Brazilia, Pretoria and of course here in Geneva, are Women.

- Jamaica has also had one female Prime Minister, and 1 national heroine

## **Policy Framework**

We have a strong and longstanding commitment to the promotion and protection of the human rights of women as well as their economic empowerment and we treat with this as a *crosscutting issue* which impacts directly and indirectly on the achievement of our national development targets.

This is also among the reasons for the Statistical Institute of Jamaica provides gender-centred data

The inclusion of women's empowerment is therefore a *cross-cutting pillar* in key policies such as Jamaica's National Development Plan – Vision 2030, the National Policy on Gender Equality (NPGE)(2011), the New Foreign Trade Policy and Action Plan (2018), the National Export Strategy (NES) and Policies relating to the promotion of MSMEs ,among others.

Central to that is SDG 5 on gender equality and women empowerment.

The Ministry for Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sports which exercises lead responsibility at the national level on women and gender issues, with the support of the Bureau for Gender Affairs (formerly the Bureau of Women's Affairs), has been actively promoting gender mainstreaming at the policy level.

There has also been ongoing and active collaboration with the private sector and civil society organisations in order to strengthen these efforts.

In addition, efforts are also being made by the Government through the relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies to review and amend other key pieces of legislation to bring them into conformity with commitments undertaken and priorities outlined in the area of gender at the national and international levels.

### **Trade/Aid for Trade**

Specifically, as regards trade, Jamaica supports an inclusive trade policy in which men and women have equal access to opportunities and benefits.

This approach acknowledges the need to overcome historical gender biases which have affected women's ability to participate fully in the labour market.

That is why we have adopted a network of policies which seek to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming into, inter alia, our foreign trade policy.

Our new Foreign Trade Policy and Action Plan was launched last month, on 4 October 2018, having successfully completed our Fourth Trade Policy Review in September 2017.

The new Foreign Trade Policy, inter alia, seeks to ensure that Jamaican firms, including those owned and operated by women, gain access to strategic markets under the most favourable conditions and in an enabling environment which fosters their competitiveness.

The Policy, which is the outcome of extensive consultations with stakeholders in the public and private sector, as well as civil society, is currently in the implementation stage and constitutes the broad framework within which national trade-related policies and strategies are pursued.

In keeping with the priority accorded to the economic diversification and empowerment of women, the Policy has a dedicated section on Trade and Gender which underscores the significant consequences that trade can have on gender equality.

It highlights the need to ensure that women and men are provided with equal opportunities in trade, given that trade liberalisation impacts both genders differently.

Further, it provides for efforts to be made to promote gender-related initiatives focused on the economic diversification and empowerment of women in trade and facilitating their increased integration into the global value chain, in collaboration with international organisations such as UNCTAD and the International Trade Centre (ITC).

Needless to say, that in the context of our trade policy, Aid for Trade plays a major role

This month marks the 7<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the launch of our National Aid for Trade Strategy (launched in November 2011).

The Strategy identified Jamaica's trade-related needs in the following three (3) pillars, namely, network infrastructure; competitiveness; export diversification and trade development

The strategy also identified critical initiatives requiring development assistance and investment.

Importantly, the strategy classifies gender as a crosscutting issue and calls for a gender sensitive approach to be taken to the formulation and implementation of technical assistance activities, given that gender needs vary in trade related projects

The Strategy is also closely linked to the CARICOM Regional Aid for Trade Strategy (2013), which also treats with gender as a crosscutting issue

### **Programmes and Initiatives**

To date, Jamaica has been the recipient of **six (6) major Aid for Trade** projects which have been utilised to **fund a diverse range of projects**, programmes and initiatives. Supplemented by other resources, these are geared towards capacity building and enhancing the economic diversification and empowerment of women, their participation in trade as well as their increased integration into national, regional and global value chains. These include:

- (i) the ***Rural Economic Development Initiative*** (REDI) Project (January 2010), aimed at improving market access for micro and small-scale rural agricultural producers and women island-wide, involved in certain tourism projects.

It also aimed at reducing rural poverty through the enhancement and development of agricultural supply chain linkages and community-based tourism initiatives.

The REDI project which was successfully concluded in July 2017, had approximately 70,000 beneficiaries.

- (ii) the ***Way-Out Project*** – (2012-2013) which is geared towards promoting the economic and political empowerment of women including entrepreneurial mentorship programmes and the staging of the Women's Empowerment Exposition and Fair and the convening of a National Gender Summit in July 2013.

(iii) ***The Jamaica Business Development Corporation Incubation System*** which provides technical support and incubation services for start-ups and established businesses through its Incubator and Resource Centre (IRC) focused on the agro/food processing and cultural /creative industry sectors, in which a significant number of women participate.

(iv) ***The Mobile Business Clinic initiative*** – an initiative aimed at providing business development and technical services to MSMEs island-wide, including those operated by women.

(v) ***Specialized training solutions in proposal writing*** which is aimed at strengthening the capacity of MSMEs in writing proposals effectively, in order to attract funding to their businesses. Over 500 persons have been trained as at the end of March 2017.

The success derived from this training initiative has led to its accreditation by the Institute of Leadership and Management UK (ILM UK), the leading provider of accreditation services for business development courses in the UK and subsequent approval has been granted for the ILM to offer the Training in several countries of the Caribbean (including the Eastern Caribbean countries, Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas and Barbados).

(vi) ***Export Max Programmes or the Enterprise Development for Growth Programmes*** - implemented by Jamaica's Trade Promotion Agency (JAMPRO) and which supports women entrepreneurs through the provision of a range of support in terms of business development, standards development and export promotion services in order to enable them to penetrate new markets and collectively increase their export sales.

The programme has recorded significant success

(vii) ***A Memorandum of Understanding on Entrepreneurship*** was also signed in November 2017 between the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport (MCGES) and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAF) to encourage entrepreneurship among women and strengthen collaboration between ministries to address the challenges women face when starting a business, such as obtaining access to financing, training, securing markets for their products and developing the skills needed to compete in these markets.

### **Women's empowerment in the context of MSMEs policy**

Jamaica plans to increase MSMEs' participation in international trade by 10% by 2019. In Jamaica, MSMEs account for 97.6% of all registered classified taxpaying enterprises and they are mostly owned and operated by women.

Our MSME and Entrepreneurship Policy provides a comprehensive and targeted framework to promote innovative and competitive MSMEs

There is a dedicated *MSME Unit* in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAF) to coordinate the implementation of the Policy as well as coordinate the activities and initiatives in the MSME space across Government

These efforts are bolstered by the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Regime which places a significant focus on the integration of MSMEs in SEZ operators' value chains and in the National Export Strategy.

The relevant linkages have also been established with the tourism, mining and the ICT sectors to complement these actions.



Further, a number of organizations have also been established at the national level to support the sustained growth and development of the MSME sector, and which can be accessed by women, who, as mentioned previously, are very active in this sector. These include:

- **The *Jamaica Business Development Corporation (JBDC)*** which assists both women and men entrepreneurs with a space to craft and create their products as well as provides a platform for the marketing and selling of innovative products through the Things Jamaica Brand.
- **The *Micro Investment Development Agency (MIDA)*** which promotes sustainable growth in the micro enterprise sector through the provision of financing and financial services that contributes to the wider objective of creating and sustaining businesses and jobs.

Since its inception, the agency has raised some J\$650.0 million for the sector, primarily for the micro sector, from which many female entrepreneurs have benefitted.

- ***Start-Up Jamaica (SUJ)*** which provides tech entrepreneurs, including women, with the skills and facilities needed grow their ideas into marketable products and services thereby contributing to economic growth.

### **Access to Financing**

Access to credit has been identified as a major challenge for women entrepreneurs.

A key factor relates to the fact that a significant number of women are in the informal sector which usually does not satisfy financiers risk profile. Hence, rates tend to be higher for

example since a large part of the finance needs of women would have to be addressed through unsecured loans.

This is one of the main reasons why the Government in collaboration with the ILO has sought to implement the formalization of the informal economy project with a view to, inter alia, contribute to the formalization of informal employment relationships and businesses, including MSMEs.

Therefore, to further complement the aforementioned initiatives, the Government of Jamaica continues to make funds available to the MSME sector through wholesale lenders, including the Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ).

The DBJ offers wholesale funds through its network of Approved Financial Institutions (AFIs) and select retailers through financing initiatives such as:

- (i) the Voucher for Technical Assistance Programme and
- (ii) the Innovation Grant from New Ideas to Entrepreneurship (IGNITE), which allows the Jamaican Government to leverage against the risk of lending directly to the MSME sector

## **Youth**

The country's youth population account for approximately 18%, with a significant proportion being outside of the labour force and in many cases unattached.

The Government has also been actively promoting strategies that support youth empowerment and employment through entrepreneurship.

These include: the establishment of resource centres for youth, strengthening youth-led organizations, the provision of mentorship support for youth and programmes to address the unique challenges of youth entrepreneurs in gaining access to financing.

## **Conclusion**

Although considerable strides have been made and are being made, there is still a long way to go in promoting the economic diversification and empowerment of women and youth.

The important thing is that all relevant stakeholders at every level are on board in order to ensure the full inclusion and participation of our women and youth in trade, as well as the further unleashing of their talents, skills and energies across all sectors of the economy in order to attain the sustainable development targets.