

Opening Remarks
for the
Launch of the Photographic Exhibition: "*She's Royal*"
to mark
OAS Inter-American Year of Women

Presented by:
Dr Gladstone Hutchinson, PhD
Director General
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Thursday, July 29, 2010, 10:00 am

Don Mills Training Room,
Planning Institute of Jamaica

GREETINGS/SALUTATIONS:

Madam Chairperson, Dr. Pauline Knight, Deputy Director General, PIOJ

Mrs Maria Jones, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture

Mrs Faith Webster, Executive Director, Bureau of Women's Affairs

Ms. Kerry Ann Parchment, representative of the Organization of American States (OAS)

Colleagues

Other distinguished ladies & gentlemen

It is my pleasure to participate in this event and any initiative that highlights the value and importance of our women in society. We have and continue to celebrate the contributions of women in various channels and ways including the arts, business, sports, politics and leadership. Yet many of our women do not have a healthy sense of self, or have low self esteem, and exist in environments where they do not enjoy equality of opportunity. Having such opportunities is critical to their well-being, development and progress, organic sustainability and happiness, and dignity.

In spite of the often systemic societal obstacles our women have accomplished a lot and have much to be proud of, and much to celebrate. They have also

contributed significantly to national development, providing leadership in health and education, in the home, in our classrooms, fields, factories, and increasingly in the boardroom.

Today's activity which is under the theme: "She's Royal", forms part of the observation of the Inter-American Year of Women. It seeks to highlight the Jamaican woman who is strong, proud, confident and successful. When a woman is "royal", she strides with confidence. Her regal bearing says that she believes in herself, has freedom of choice, is capable of making her own decisions, and has control over her own body and destiny. Not only does she respect herself, but kids, adults and men also respect her as a woman and citizen.

Madam Chairperson, the theme "She's Royal", fits well with the end goal of *Vision 2030 Jamaica* as it provides the means by which every woman will be "royal". She will be empowered to make sustainable improvements to her well-being (emotional, physical, spiritual, social, financial) and holistic development. Her future is ensured as within the context of this integrated National Development Plan, the Vision is for:

A society marked by sustainable and humane development processes in which the rights of all persons are guaranteed and protected and where men and women enjoy equal access to opportunities, resources and rewards, and where women are empowered to share equally in governance structures and decision-making at the micro and macro levels of the society

Through *Vision 2030 Jamaica*, all our women will have the enabling environment to accomplish whatever they wish. This is in keeping with the first Goal of the Plan: *Jamaicans are empowered to achieve their fullest potential*. The Guiding Principles further direct us to the creation of a vector of values by which everyone, boys and girls, men and women will have the propriety – including, good manners, politeness, respectability, compassion, trust, honesty and truthfulness, all necessary public goods for improving civil society to create a society that has transitivity in fairness and justice, and that everyone has reason to value. In this way, women as well as men will learn to accept the responsibility of agency to live sustainable lives.

Our daughters, mothers, sisters... will therefore live in a fairer, kinder Jamaica where their vulnerabilities are lessened and their capacity is improved.

In conclusion, Madam Chairperson, the PIOJ, as the National Focal Point for ***Vision 2030 Jamaica***, and consequently, leaders in the National Transformation Process to make ***“Jamaica, the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business”***, has a special interest in ensuring that adequate recognition is given to the achievements of our women in spite of the gender-related obstacles that they have to overcome.

I take this opportunity to commend the OAS for its initiative in “promoting a broad mobilization ... towards an assessment of the achievements and challenges

in defending the human rights of women and gender equality, as well as for increasing public awareness of these issues”. I also commend the work of the Bureau of Women’s Affairs and all who have been and are at the forefront of women’s development in Jamaica.

I applaud our members of staff and all who are responsible for assisting in mounting this week-long exhibition which will run until Thursday, August 5, 2010. Your innovation and creativity have ensured that your intended message is effectively communicated. Indeed the women whom we choose to extol, and the unsung heroes across the society, in the words of Mr. Tarrus Riley, are truly “royal”. They are certainly “one of a kind” and we always want and need them in our lives.

It is therefore my pleasure to launch this photographic exhibition as one of the many events in observing the OAS Inter-American Year of Women.