

**STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE OLIVIA GRANGE, CD, MP MINISTER OF
CULTURE, GENDER, ENTERTAINMENT & SPORT**

RE: OBSERVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2018

HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

I'm a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That's me.

We are women

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal women,

We are.

Mr. Speaker,

I rise in this Honorable House today, as Minister with the portfolio of Gender Affairs, to acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments of women and girls locally and internationally. On International Women's Day, the United Nations and the world, join in the commemoration of this significant event.

The celebration of March 8, as International Women's Day, marks the increasing recognition of the struggles of women against all forms of discrimination and exploitation, and focuses on the need for equality, for national liberation, democracy, peace and progress, in all countries of the world.

This date derived its significance from March 8, 1908, when women needle trade workers in New York, reacting against their brutal exploitation, held a women's day demonstration to fight for the building of the needle trades union and demand the right to vote. The success of the rally led to similar rallies in other U.S. cities and in other countries.

In October 1975, at the World Congress for International Women's Year, held in Berlin and attended by over 2,000 delegates, a decision was taken to recognize March 8 as International Women's Day in all countries. It was first celebrated in Jamaica in March 1978.

Mr. Speaker, the global theme for International Women's Day 2018, is, the "***Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives***". Echoing the priority theme of the upcoming 62nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, International Women's Day will also draw attention to the rights and activism of rural women, who make up over a quarter of the world population and majority of the 43 per cent of women in the global agricultural labour force.

This gives Jamaica the ideal opportunity to continue empowering all women, both urban and rural, whilst celebrating the activists who are working assiduously to reinforce the rights of women and strengthen their potential. It is on this premise that Jamaica has created the local theme "***Empowering Women and Girls in Science, Technology and Business***".

This year's national theme encourages us to reflect on the tremendous contribution that women in the field of science, technology and business have made to the social, economic, cultural and political development of Jamaica.

Girls and Women in Business

Mr. Speaker, there is increasing recognition that women entrepreneurs are the new engines for inclusive and sustainable industrial growth, and are the rising stars of economies in developing countries¹. In 2012, the World Economic Forum identified women entrepreneurs as "the way forward".² Yet, despite this, women entrepreneurs still struggle to take their rightful place in economic life. Even though more and more women are starting businesses globally, they still manage fewer businesses than men, and run businesses that are in less profitable sectors, that grow more slowly and are ultimately more likely to fail.

¹ Vossenberg, Saskia (2013). "Women Entrepreneurship Promotion in Developing Countries: What explains the gender gap in entrepreneurship and how to close it?" Maastricht School of Management

² World Economic Forum (2012). "Global Gender Gap Report 2012"

These gender gaps impose real costs on our society. When women do not participate equally in entrepreneurship, our economy loses the benefits that would otherwise be provided by new products and services, additional revenues and new jobs. There is also the failure to progress due to long-term negative effects on workforce skills and education, which occurs when half of the potential pool of labour is not developed. The clear consequences of women's economic marginalization further emphasize the pressing need for gender equality and the reinforcement of economic empowerment for our women and girls.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) has signed on to international frameworks that seek to promote and reinforce gender equality in our society. These include the Beijing Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women. By signing these documents, the GOJ made a commitment to promote gender equality, empower women and eliminate gender-based violence.

From a local stand point, the National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE) is the main policy in Jamaica that seeks to address inequalities and gender-based discrimination. Another is the National Strategic Action Plan to Eliminate Gender-based Violence (NSAP-GBV) and a recently signed memorandum of understanding (MOU), aimed at developing strategies and collaborative programmes that will promote and encourage the involvement of women in entrepreneurship between the Ministries of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, and Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Speaker, it is our responsibility as a government, to stand by the commitments made and ensure that our women and girls are given the fair chance, to develop and advance in our society as entrepreneurs.

Girls and Women in Science and Technology

I will now look at the importance of promoting women and girls in the field of science and technology.

Mr. Speaker, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields are crucial areas for sustainable development, as they enable us to find solutions to threats posed by global challenges such as climate change, global health epidemics, and increased income inequality³.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight the importance of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields as one of the many ways to achieve a more peaceful and prosperous world, as well as gender equality.

Despite rising demand for STEM professionals, women, who represent over half the world population, are often underrepresented in these fields. According to a survey conducted by ManpowerGroup in 2015, there is a global “talent shortage” of 38 per cent, with the top ten hardest jobs to fill including a number of STEM-related professions. At the same time, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) estimates that women make up just 28 per cent of scientific researchers worldwide.⁴

Mr. Speaker, we know that women and girls participate in STEM fields at lower rates due to a many reasons, such as lack of encouragement, active discouragement and lack of role models. Studies have declared that it is not an ability issue.

There is an increased awareness of the role model problem, where too little women are portrayed in the STEM career field. Most times when children are asked to draw a scientist or an astronaut, most students draw a male in a lab coat or a male image is represented for the astronaut. Whilst the great majority of portrayals of scientists and engineers in movies and television shows have for the most part been men.

As children's rights activist Marian Wright Edelman expressed so well, “*You can't be what you can't see*”, it is our duty, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that female role models who are active in the STEM fields are portrayed not only in the media, but also within the educational institutions.

³ UNESCO, 2016. Closing the Gender Gap in STEM: Drawing more girls and women into Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002457/245717e.pdf>

⁴ UNESCO, 2016. Closing the Gender Gap in STEM: Drawing more girls and women into Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002457/245717e.pdf>

Advocates such as Megan Smith, who became the first female chief technologist of the United States and our very own pioneer, Professor Patricia Martin-DeLeon, who is an international scientific icon, are prime examples of women breaking through the barriers and achieving in a predominantly male field.

Scheduled and Ongoing Activities for International Women's Day 2018

Here, I would like to bring your attention to some of the commemorative activities scheduled for the period March to March 24 to which the Bureau of Gender Affairs (BGA) in partnership with other key stakeholders have committed to:

- **IWD Commemorative Church Service** was held on Sunday, March 4, 2018 at the Kingston Church of Christ in Kingston. During the commemorative church service, the BGA brought awareness to the objectives and activities undertaken by the organization, the importance of celebrating international women's day and highlighted the important role that women and girls play in the development of our country.
- **Madam Rose Leon Memorial Lecture.** On Monday, March 5, 2018, the Women's Political Caucus hosted the Annual Memorial Lecture in honour of the late Rose Agatha Leon, CD, JP, 1911-1999. This year's Guest Lecturer was veteran politician, Hon. Olivia Grange, who cross examined this year's topic "Gender Equality in Politics in Jamaica: How Far We Have Come", while providing an in-depth account of her rather scintillating political life.
- **Women's Empowerment Symposium** will be held on March 8, 2018 at the National Indoor Sports Centre, Arthur Wint Drive, Kingston. The symposium will focus on increasing the aspirations and understanding of girls regarding science, technology and business, whilst highlighting the myriad of opportunities that are available for females in the non-traditional industries. Additionally, it will seek to empower and build the capacity of women entrepreneurs in small businesses in Jamaica.

At the symposium, ***The Inspiring Change Initiative: 2018***, which is a Grant Award spearheaded by the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, through the Bureau of Gender Affairs, will present grant awards to female entrepreneurs and community-based or non-governmental organization whose specific focus is on entrepreneurship and business development.

Another key feature of this Symposium will be our ***Girls in STEM Award***. This segment will recognize fifty (50) female students from across all six educational regions for their outstanding performances in STEM.

- **International Women’s Day Concert** will be held on March 8, 2018 at the National Indoor Sports Centre, Arthur Wint Drive, Kingston. This will feature a myriad of performances from our local dancehall, gospel and reggae artists, who will join in solidarity to assist vulnerable women in our society.
- **Gender and Development Lecture** on the “**The work is not neutered: the vaginal or penile gaze in art**” will be hold on March 8, 2018 at Edna Manley college of the Visual and Performing Arts. The guest speaker will be Professor Opal Palmer Adisa. This was organized by our Gender Focal Point, Dr. Keino Senior.
- **Trelawny Women’s Empowerment Forum** will be held on March 9, 2018 at the Salvation Army Church in Falmouth, Trelawny. The Bureau of Gender Affairs in partnership with the Trelawny Parish Advisory Committee on Gender Affairs and Wellness in Motion, will host the forum under the theme “*Breaking Barriers: Transforming Rural Women’s Lives*”. The aim of the forum is to empower rural women, by providing them with beneficial information on social and economic services offered across Jamaica.
- **Gender, Health and Information Fair**, will be held on March 24, 2018 in Breast Works community, Portland. The Bureau of Gender Affairs in partnership with the Women’s Liberty Movement will host the fair. This health fair will provide women in the

community with the opportunity to access health services and information on gender-based violence that may not be readily available or accessible.

Mr. Speaker, the objectives of International Women's Day 2018 activities are as follows:

- To celebrate the contribution of women in science, technology and business to national development.
- To ensure that women and girls are aware of opportunities in the fields of science, technology and business.
- To mainstream the priorities of women and girls in traditionally under represented sectors.

The expected outcome following the activities is that more women and girls are economically empowered and are more aware of the many doors of opportunities in the science, technology and business fields, that are waiting to be discovered.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for our country to continue to highlight and commend our women and girls on their numerous achievements and to create a space that is free from bias, judgment and inequality.

We have to encourage our girls, as they are our future!

We have to motivate our women, as without the root or a solid foundation, the future cannot have growth! No tree can survive and grow without nurturing and anchoring roots!

In closing, I leave you with a few words "***The true wealth of a community is measured by how carefully it listens to its women and how sincerely it values their wisdom. Empowering women empowers us all***".