**JAMAICA’S POLICY STATEMENT**

**FOR THE WSIS+10 HIGH LEVEL EVENT**

**June 10, 2014 in Geneva, Switzerland**

**PRESENTED BY THE HONOURABLE PHILLIP PAULWELL**

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Salutations:

In light of the audience I am addressing there is little need for me to speak of the phenomenal advances that have been made in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) over the past 20 years. It is recognized that ICT is a driving force and a great tool for promoting social and economic development, combating poverty and facilitating the integration of developing countries into the global economy.

As we are aware this WSIS+10 High-Level Event is designed to review the progress made in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes under the mandates of participating agencies, and to take stock of achievements in the last 10 years based on reports of WSIS Stakeholders. The Government of Jamaica recognises and acknowledges the work and the significant role of the various United Nations agencies (particularly the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in giving support and coordinating activities and initiatives designed to give effect to the WSIS agenda as elaborated in the Tunis and Geneva Declarations and outcomes.

At the time of the development and elaboration of the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs), Jamaica liberalized its telecommunications industry which paved the way for dramatic developments in our ICT sector. Since then we have made significant strides; all of which have resulted in improved service to Jamaicans and the positioning of Jamaica as an active participant in the global economy and the information society. The achievements have been many and include:

* Tele-density in excess of 120%;
* a 100% digital telecommunications network;
* submarine fibre optic transmission ring around the island;
* international submarine cable links from Jamaica to Cayman, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Florida; and
* a competitive ICT sector.

While we are encouraged by these achievements the Government is concerned about Internet penetration which remains below desired levels. We are cognizant of the fact that broadband provides infrastructural support to a whole ecosystem of greater commercial activity and touches all the vital organs of a functional society. Broadband creates a platform for the leveraging of economies of scale for the delivery of services and lends flexibility to developing solutions to solve problems. Consequently, countries, communities, corporations and individuals that lack easy access to broadband may miss economic and social opportunities, to the detriment of their developmental efforts.

Broadband access and use in underserved and un-served communities is therefore a critical element of our plan of action to facilitate Jamaica’s achievement of our national development objective as articulated in our National Development Plan “Vision 2030”. Indeed as with the Millennium Development Goals, Jamaica’s Vision 2030 recognises that ICT is a key enabler of all sectors and participants in the Jamaican economy.

The Government of Jamaica places a premium on the deployment of affordable high capacity networks such as broadband, as well as, next generation networks with appropriate levels of resilience and flexibility to adjust to new technologies. In this connection, we are close to completing an Island Wide Broadband Wide Area Network Service Project which will see secondary schools, libraries select post offices and health facilities benefiting from high speed transmission of up to 100 megabits per second on the backbone, at an availability of 99.9%. The Project is expected to contribute in a positive way to making broadband available to communities near to and through which the backbone network extends.

The world is transitioning to a high tech economy. This new economy is defined by businesses that are able to successfully adapt ICT to drive their business operations. Government Policy must therefore support initiatives which provide an enabling framework for businesses to utilise ICT.

In this regard the Government of Jamaica is leading by example and has advanced its e-Government agenda for the delivery of public services in an integrated fashion with two major decisions, namely the

1. establishment of the post of a national Chief Information Officer (CIO), who will be responsible for providing overarching technology vision and leadership in the development and implementation of the Government‘s ICT strategies and investments; and
2. widening of the mandate of eGov Jamaica Ltd to include responsibility for implementing Government of Jamaica-wide ICT Projects.

The actions taken by the government will drive greater e-participation and significantly contribute to greater levels of digital inclusion across the length and breadth of Jamaica. Digital inclusion however, does not come without its challenges. Issues regarding child protection and cybersecurity are important considerations in creating an enabling environment facilitated by broadband and ICTs. Nevertheless we will not be daunted by these challenges as we seek to collaborate on a global level to mitigate against these threats to development. In this connection Jamaica has taken steps to revise its cybercrimes legislation, as well as, to establish a Cyber Incident Response Team (CIRT).

Indeed we have successfully implemented an e-Learning project in all secondary schools throughout Jamaica. Having learnt from that experience we are now preparing the ground work to further build out the e-learning platform through a tablets in schools programme.

Through enlightened Government policy the people have seen significant reductions in the cost of telecommunications services. Pursuant to the said policy, we have embarked on and expect to establish during this calendar year an Internet Exchange Point (IXP) which will further contribute to the development of a more stable, competitive, cost efficient and robust ICT and broadband ecosystem in Jamaica.

A key aim of digital inclusion is empowerment of our peoples. It is unfortunate that in today’s modern world women and children, particularly girls, the elderly and those in the disabled communities, are often excluded or under-represented in the decisions which affect their economic and social development. It is for this reason that the Government of Jamaica recently amended its legislation to extend the application of our universal service obligations to include ICT programmes which specifically target these vulnerable groups.

We agree that much progress has been made by many countries in implementing the WSIS Action lines. In fact the past 10 years have seen exceptional levels of collaboration among governments and all relevant stakeholders to address various ICT related issues with a view to ensure confidence and trust in the use of ICTs. Significantly, the multi-stakeholder approach has proven to be an effective means of sharing the knowledge and wealth needed to create a more equitable global community.

Jamaica is an island but we do not stand alone in this global community, therefore I wish to reiterate Jamaica’s commitment to the implementation of the WSIS outcomes. More remains to be done for us to achieve the vision elaborated in the Millennium Development Goals, especially as it affects LDCs and SIDs. As a result Jamaica supports the vision for WISI beyond 2015 and calls upon those who are more advanced and better resourced to collaborate with small, medium and developing countries in a more tangible and meaningful way to achieve the WSIS outcomes.

Thank you.