*Jamaica*

*Jamaican Youth Advocacy Network – Monique Long*

*On the issue of SRHR and Abortion*

Jamaica has not made **any notable progress** in the development of legislation to protect the sexual and reproductive health and rights of its population, or to provide women with access to **safe and legal** abortion services.

This issue is raised amidst ongoing and emerging sexual and reproductive health and rights issues which adversely impact the lives and livelihoods of Jamaicans, *in many cases the poor and vulnerable*.

The State has indicated that ‘significant steps have been taken towards the development of a sexual and reproductive health policy”. This assertion is concerning because the lack of specific language to clearly outline the steps that *have indeed been taken*, leads to uncertainty as to the progress of the policy and the timeline for its completion and implementation.

The State party has also indicated that “abortions are permissible on medical grounds”. Unfortunately, this assertion remains unfounded, as Jamaica has no active law or policy which legalizes the provision of abortions.

The State party continues to rely on the existence of a report completed by the Abortion Policy Review Advisory Group in 2007. However, Jamaica has yet to implement ***any*** of the recommendations stemming from the report.

**The repeated promises are not enough. The vague progress indicators without clear timelines and defined actions are not enough.**

We are urging the Committee to recommend that the state amends its laws to allow for the provision of safe and legal abortions, and to create a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Law to protect its citizens.

*HIV/AIDS*

Discrimination against persons living with HIV remains an area of concern in Jamaica. Persons continue to be fearful of their health status being disclosed through breaches of confidentiality by healthcare workers and the discrimination from their families, communities and places of employment that stem from this disclosure.

**It must be emphasised that Protection begins with a *robust* legislative framework for anti-discrimination…which Jamaica lacks.**

The Jamaican Constitution excludes “health status” from its anti-discrimination provisions, and Jamaica has *no comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation*. As such, persons living with HIV or AIDS lack any formidable legal recourse for discrimination.

Both the National HIV/AID Workplace Policy and the National HIV-Related Discrimination Reporting and Redress System have not been meaningfully implemented and lack any real accountability structures.

In Addition, The State party continues to use weak, non-committal language to describe the status of the National Occupational Health and Safety Legislation.

Accordingly… **We urge** the Committee to ascertain from the State party a clear timeline for the implementation of the National Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) legislation and to establish, in legislation, protection from discrimination based on health status, including HIV Status, accompanied by a robust enforcement and redress mechanism.

***On the issue of Gender Based Violence and Women in Shelters***

Jamaica has indicated their support for initiatives funded and run by NGO’s which provide shelter for victims of GBV…the state and has indicated a commitment to establish regional emergency centres.

While we laud these commitments, we remain unconvinced that without a robust monitoring framework that these commitments will be anything more than unfulfilled promises.

We urge the Committee to request that the government of Jamaica provide language on the development of shelters for women exposed to Gender based violence that we can hold them accountable to for the next review cycle.