

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

46th Regular Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Item 6: Universal Periodic Review - Outcome Adoption of Jamaica

Oral statement delivered by the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)

Monday, 15 March 2021

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) commends the Government of Jamaica for supporting 120 out of 170 recommendations received during this UPR cycle. We welcome the positive developments highlighted in the National Report, especially in the context of tackling gender-based violence, child abuse, poverty, climate change, and anti-trafficking measures.

However, we regret that Jamaica has noted 50 recommendations on issues that have been widely raised by Member States as well as other stakeholders.

There are continued concerns on the disproportionate use of force — including lethal force — and other abuses by the police and security forces, especially during the public emergency. While we welcome the attempt towards defining the standard operating procedure for law enforcement and the steps towards promulgating a “Less Lethal Weapons” Policy, we underline the need to meaningfully strengthen internal accountability mechanisms, including the Independent Commission of Investigations (INDECOM), to tackle impunity in such cases.

We call on the Government to uphold its commitment to transparency and accountability by effectively implementing the Access to Information Act 2004 and refraining from introducing amendments that would dilute or defeat its purpose.

We appreciate Jamaica’s commitment and continued cooperation with civil society to tackle trafficking in persons. However, we remain concerned that other forms of modern slavery such as forced labour, forced marriage and child prostitution still exist in a legal vacuum. With renewed efforts towards training, investigation and prosecution, we call on the Government to undertake periodic studies, such as the 2015 study commissioned by the Task Force, to ensure an evidence-based policy in this regard.

We are concerned about the high incidence of gender-based violence and maternal mortality linked to general criminalisation of abortion which demands an urgent action. We also recommend Jamaica to: (i) decriminalise consensual same-sex relations between adults; and (ii) ratify the UNCAT.

Lastly, we urge the Government to Jamaica to expedite the process of establishing an independent National Human Rights Institution in the country in accordance with the Paris Principles.

Thank you.