

Statement by the Government of Jamaica (two minutes)

3rd Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent

Panel #3 – Culture and Recognition; 18 April 2024

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Thank you, moderator, and to the panellists for the engaging contributions this morning.

The cultural investment and contribution of People of African Descent to the development of society, industry, science and the arts across the globe are an indelible part of the common heritage of mankind. However, we often remain marginalised and rendered invisible, even within our own societies. Therefore, we need to promote a culture of recognition, recognising that our cultural diversity and traditions remain fundamental to our development as people of African Descent. Jamaica's foremost philosophers – our first National Hero, the Rt. Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey and cultural icon, Bob Marley, have proven excellent messengers in this regard. However, much remains to be done.

To this end, the Jamaican Government supports the Maroon, Rastafari and Revival communities in promotion of the African roots of the Jamaican culture, including through the establishment of a Cultural Liaison Office in the Ministry of Culture. This Office is responsible for sustaining and celebrating the Rastafarian culture, including the sacramental use of cannabis in the only new religion of the 20th century.

The promotion of culture as an important form of recognition, will further serve to bolster and mainstream the African-based traditions, heritage and cultural expressions of Jamaica and remove the stigma historically attached to them by colonial policy and decree. The Jamaican Government cultivates this culture of recognition through formalized curriculum, by the inclusion of cultural content in schools, and spearheading cultural festivals and activities that showcase our unique culture as a people. Further, the active memorialization and commemoration of significant dates in our history, such as the January 6 celebration of the Maroon Signing of the Treaty with the British in 1738, and Reggae month in February are promoted extensively.

Culture is identity. *“A people without knowledge of their past, history, origin and **culture** is like a tree without roots”*, Garvey said. Therefore, let us be like trees planted by the rivers of water, our cultural roots dug deep, as we soar upwards towards heights of recognition not yet attained.

