

**REMARKS BY THE  
ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE  
SENATOR THE HON. DOROTHY LIGHTBOURNE, Q.C,  
AT THE  
LAUNCH OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WEEK 2008  
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2008**

Salutations.

This year, for the second consecutive year, Jamaica will observe Restorative Justice Week, which begins from tomorrow (Saturday, February 2) to Friday, February 8.

The Government of Jamaica has given its commitment to promoting Restorative Justice principles because of the inherent humane and holistic approach to conflict resolution and the multiple positive benefits which our communities and the justice system can achieve. I would like to spell out just two examples – If a neighbourhood embraces Restorative Justice practices, there would be a significant reduction in the number of physical harm inflicted; this would bring about reduced costs at our hospitals. Secondly, elements of Restorative Justice in our criminal justice system can ease the overcrowding in our penal institutions; this would also lessen the cost of maintaining inmates in these facilities.

The effectiveness of structured Restorative Justice practices (or RJ as it is commonly referred to) has been proven in many countries and in varied cultures. There is no reason why Jamaica cannot assimilate the same principles and practices into our everyday lives. The values and attitudes inherent in modern-day RJ practices were the same ideals used by past generations of Jamaicans; we should therefore make every effort to embrace those same principles to create a more caring nation if we are to truly say that we are 'Out Of Many One People.'

Yet, this administration stands ready to support any initiative which can influence positive social change, and so we call on all Jamaicans who, for whatever reason, are unable to participate in the special activities planned for Restorative Justice Week 2008, to at least reflect on how best they can treat each other.

#### WEEK OF ACTIVITIES

The week will begin with two church services; one to be held this Saturday at the North Street Seventh Day Adventist, and the other at The Church of St. Margaret, Liguanea. I will be attending both services because I want to demonstrate my belief in the concept of Restorative Justice, and what it can do for our people.

Young victims will be involved in the Week's programme which will culminate with a two-day International Conference beginning on Thursday, February 7 to Friday, February 8 at the Hilton Kingston Hotel.

The events for the week are being organised by the Ministry of Justice and several of its Agencies, as well as external partners such as the Child Development Agency and the Probation Department which are a part of the youth-focussed retreats. This arrangement also shows that the success of RJ programmes does not lie within a single body, whether it be State-operated or a civic organisation. It requires collaboration.

Jamaica joins a growing number of countries in Europe and on the African continent, which have set aside one week to mark the relevance of Restorative Justice in their respective societies. Our own RJ Week precedes the designated Peace Month; and so we anticipate that the citizens will be more inclined to adopt the Restorative Justice principles that are to be debated and promoted to assist them to better understand that the quality of their relationships can bring about a more peaceful society.

It is not beyond us, as a people, to be more civil towards each other. We all see the need to stem the social decline, so let us be deliberate in our attempt to restore harmony in our country.

We would also urge the media to assist us in informing our citizens about the efforts to develop and implement Restorative Justice programmes, during the week of observance and beyond.