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NEWS RELEASE

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JUSTICE MINISTER REAFFIRMS GOVT'S COMMITMENT TO RJ POLICY

Senator the Hon. Lightbourne, Attorney General and Minister of Justice, has reiterated the commitment by the Government of Jamaica "to incorporating Restorative Justice (RJ) principles and practices within the Justice Reform Programme...and as such, this administration stands ready to support any initiative which can influence positive social change." In addition, a National Policy on Restorative Justice will go to the Cabinet for approval by April this year.

Speaking at the launch of the second annual Restorative Justice Week, this morning (Friday, February 1) at the offices of the Ministry of Justice, Oxford Road, Minister Lightbourne also called on citizens "to reflect on the best way to treat each other and the efforts each of us should make to enhance social cohesion and harmony." This, she said, can be realised partly through a deliberate effort to embrace the principles of Restorative Justice with its humane and holistic approach to conflict resolution.

(MORE)

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“The effectiveness of structured Restorative Justice Practices has been tried and proven in many countries and varied cultures,” the Minister continued. “The values inherent in modern-day RJ practices are the same ideals that have served the past generations of Jamaicans, such as our elders in the community and groups like the Maoris of New Zealand and the First Nations people in Canada; and so we should therefore make every effort to embrace those principles as we strive to create a more caring society.”

Minister Lightbourne told news reporters at the function that she will be demonstrating her belief in the concept of Restorative Justice and what it can do for the society by attending the two church services organised to mark the start of Restorative Justice Week 2008. The first service will be hosted by the Seventh Day Adventist Church, North Street, tomorrow (February 2, beginning at 11:00 a.m. The second service is to be held on Sunday, February 3 at The Church of St. Margaret's, Old Hope Road, Liguanea.

The Justice Minister is also slated to formally open the two-day International Conference which begins on Thursday, February 7 at the Hilton Kingston Hotel, New Kingston.

Elaborating on the week's activities, Minister Lightbourne said that the support and involvement of local and overseas partners in observing Restorative Justice Week “shows that the success of RJ programmes can only be attained when citizens, communities and the machinery of the State commit and collaborate for the greater good of the nation.”

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The Victim Support Unit, Justice Training Institute, Dispute Resolution Foundation as well as the Child Development Agency and the Probation Service are assisting the Ministry of Justice in this endeavour. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are providing technical support.

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