



PRESS RELEASE

SELLING OFF JAMAICA'S SOVEREIGNTY: GoJ SET TO SIGN NEW ACP-EU AGREEMENT IN SAMOA

NOV. 9, 2023: The Government of Jamaica is set to sign a comprehensive new binding 20-year agreement with the European Union (EU), despite repeated calls by several citizens groups to the glaring danger of multiple clauses in the pending African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP)- EU Agreement.

The agreement will bind Jamaica to undefined human rights obligations tied to trade sanctions (Art.101(7) General Pact), reintroduce Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) back into schools despite parents' outrage in 2012 with regards to CSE's sexualizing content (Art. 48(7), Caribbean Pact); trap the nation in yet-to-be-negotiated international instruments (Art.36(2) General Pact), and demand the acceptance of terms that directly threaten citizens' freedom of conscience and speech (Art. 9(2) and Art. 20(1), General Pact) among other alarming concerns.

For 27 months, the Jamaica Coalition for a Healthy Society (JCHS) and seven other Jamaican NGO's have been impressing upon the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade to take heed of the obvious threats to Jamaica's national sovereignty in the current language of the agreement.

"We are not alone in warning our government about the dangers of this agreement" said JCHS Chairman, Dr Wayne West. "The Government of Namibia has this week wisely pulled out of signing the agreement. They cited similar concerns to the Jamaican NGOs as well as their suspicion of the alleged removal by the EU, after negotiations were closed, of a provision allowing reservations by countries. This questionable action needs to be explained and challenged."

JCHS Legal Counsel Shirley Richards pointed to the frustrated efforts of the groups in trying to hold dialogue with government decision makers. "At the OPM's Education Townhall in September 2022, Hon. Minister Kamina Johnson-Smith promised the nation that Jamaica was not going to be party to any agreement that would be detrimental to our children. We subsequently wrote asking how she would keep this promise. It's now more than one year later and she has not answered this question. At the same town hall meeting, the Minister of Education invited concerned parents to meet with her. However, attempts to set up a meeting went unanswered by that Ministry."

Although the Prime Minister emphasised his commitment to preserving national values and sovereignty in the pending new ACP-EU Agreement, for the last two years, the groups have been informing the public that the security of Jamaica's laws are in peril as signing an agreement without knowledge of its true scope is in effect signing a binding blind commitment.

The eight NGOs have signaled their intention to publicly defend their human rights and freedoms, along with other citizens. They call on all other concerned Jamaicans to make their voices publicly heard on this matter of great importance.

The new ACP-EU Agreement, to be called the Samoa Agreement, is scheduled to be signed on November 15 in Samoa at the upcoming ACP -EU Ministerial meeting.

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