



MINISTRY OF  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
& FOREIGN TRADE

# INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR WOMEN IN DIPLOMACY 2026

MESSAGE BY:

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE KAMINA JOHNSON SMITH, JP  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

Jamaica is honoured to join the global community today in commemorating International Day for Women in Diplomacy, which recognizes the contributions of women diplomats to global affairs and advocates for equal gender representation in international relations. This year's commemoration takes place against the backdrop of overwhelming support for a woman to be elected as the next Secretary-General of the United Nations, which would be a first in the history of the Organisation.

Jamaica has been a steadfast advocate of women's rights, being one of the earliest countries to grant women the right to vote and to stand for elections in 1944; a decision that has since contributed to Jamaica producing a distinguished line of female leaders in public life and in diplomacy.

For Jamaica, today's celebration is particularly significant as women constitute the majority of staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, with over 80 per cent of the senior management positions held by women. Furthermore, the majority of our Heads of Mission and Deputy Heads of Mission are women. Jamaica, therefore, pays tribute to the pivotal role played by our women in building a Foreign Service that has served the people of Jamaica with distinction since Independence. We take pride in recognising pioneering women such as the late Ambassador Carmen Parris, who made history as Jamaica's first female ambassador, and the late Ambassador Mignonette Patricia Durant, former Ambassador/Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations and the first Jamaican to be appointed United Nations Ombudsman in April 2002 at the rank of Assistant Secretary-General. They and other women in the Service have paved the way for generations of women in diplomacy.

As Jamaica's first female Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, I am proud of the many women who continue to serve in our diplomatic service to advance Jamaica's interests in both the bilateral and multilateral arenas. In their capacities as Ambassadors, High Commissioners, Permanent Representatives, Foreign Service Officers, technical experts and administrators, these women work every day to help shape Jamaica's diplomacy and the perspectives we bring to the international stage.

We take this opportunity to celebrate the contributions and achievements of our present and past female leaders, including my former Permanent Secretary Ambassador Marcia Gilbert-Roberts and my current Permanent Secretary, Ambassador Sheila Sealy Monteith.

As we mark this day, we reaffirm our commitment to fostering an environment where women and girls can pursue careers in diplomacy and international relations contributing to shaping global solutions and to inspire the next generations of women in diplomacy.

We celebrate our women in diplomacy, as we continue "to play our part in advancing the welfare of the whole human race".

Happy International Day for Women in Diplomacy!!!