

News

Gov't moving to combat child labour, keep kids in school

Observer Reporter
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GOVERNMENT is soon expected to take steps to keep children under age 15 out of the workforce and in school, by ratifying an education regime established by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Convention C138138 and Convention C182 will respectively ensure that children remain in school up to age 15, and set that same age as the minimum working age.

At the same time, the Convention aims to ensure that in underdeveloped countries, certain types of hazardous work may only be undertaken by persons 18 years and over. The age of adulthood under Jamaican law is 18 years of age.

Information Minister, Burchell Whiteman, made this disclosure at Monday's post-Cabinet media briefing at Jamaica House.

Whiteman also put in context recent reports emanating from the United States Secretary of State and the United Nations which expressed concern about issues, including the plight of street children, sexual exploitation and child neglect.

He said both reports recognised that improved protection for children was related to the passage of the Child Care and Protection Act into law, which was now before Parliament.

The Act, he said, would "provide a large and detailed body of legislative work covering everything from

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child labour to protection of children in care, educational provisions, how to deal with child offenders".

"It certainly speaks to everything that any responsible international organisation could require," Whiteman observed.

"There has always been a little tension between the international organisations and the local culture, the Child Care and Protection Act has dealt with this matter I think satisfactorily," he added on the issue of child labour.

The Child Care and Protection Act combines and modernises the over 40 year-old Juveniles Act and other relevant legislation to offer comprehensive protection for children, under a single legislative framework.

In relation to charges of Jamaican children being exploited through child prostitution, the minister noted that it was a serious matter, but that information on the problem "seemed to be anecdotal" and there was obviously a need for further study to statistically determine the extent of the issue.

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