



Government of Bermuda

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

by

**The Hon. Tinee Furbert, JP, MP
Minister of Social Development and Seniors**

Human Rights Day 2022

Friday, 9th December 2022

Mr. Speaker,

This morning I rise to remind members of this Honourable House that tomorrow December 10th will be celebrated globally as Human Rights Day 2022. As Minister responsible for human rights in Bermuda, it is a privilege to share with my Honourable colleagues, the activities that have been undertaken, and those that will be implemented in support of recognizing this important Day.

Mr. Speaker,

As a historical backdrop, in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in a response to the “barbarous acts which...outraged the conscience of mankind” during the Second World War. The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognized human rights to be the foundation for freedom, justice and peace, and sets out a broad range of fundamental human rights and freedoms that belong to all of us. Such freedoms include, but are not limited to the right to freedom of expression; the right to education; rights to life; liberty and privacy; and, the rights to social security.

Mr. Speaker,

Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not a binding document, it has been the inspiration for more than 60 human rights instruments including

Bermuda's Human Rights Act 1981, which together constitute an international standard of human rights. The Human Rights Act 1981, received assent on the 7th July 1981, and was brought into operation on the 21st day of May 1982. Over the years the Human Rights Act has been amended to enhance our human rights and provide further protections to our residents comprising women and girls, children, homeless individuals, and vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker,

Human Rights Day 2022 is a day to celebrate the achievements of those who have fought for, and protected human rights. Human Rights Day inspires others to speak up and take action to end discrimination in all forms. Also, it's a Day of reflection on the future, so a plan moving forward can be developed of what needs to be done to make society fairer for everyone. This year the theme for Human Rights Day is **Dignity, Freedom and Justice for All**. Also, this year marks the launch of a year-long campaign to promote and recognize the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which will be celebrated in 2023.

Mr. Speaker,

The Human Rights Commission, as the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) for Bermuda, plays a crucial role in promoting and monitoring the effective implementation of international human rights standards at the national level. The Commission also monitors the Government's commitment to human rights and consults the Government in this regard.

Mr. Speaker,

I take this opportunity to inform my Honourable colleagues and the general public about some of the activities that the Human Rights Commission has been involved during this year which include:

1. On March 7th, 2022, the Commission gained membership to the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI). This Commonwealth Forum is a member-led network of human rights institutions, ombudsmen, and public defenders. Members protect, promote and advance human rights in their respective countries, from within the

Americas and Europe, to Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. The community of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions promotes shared expertise and collaboration to ensure a Commonwealth in which the rights of all citizens are respected, protected, and enjoyed.

2. In June 2022, the Human Rights Commission engaged with the United Nations Group - UN Women and, following consultation with their organization, they prepared a report for the Government's consideration about the United Nation's proposed partnership to support the UN Sustainable Development Goals Initiative and assessment of innovative financing for gender equality.
3. Lastly, during this year the Selection and Appointment Committee of the Human Rights Commission, successfully appointed members to the Human Rights Tribunal to adjudicate human rights complaints. The Tribunal has met, and are currently in the process of assigning members to panels.

I extend congratulations to the Human Rights Commission on its achievement of becoming a member of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions.

Mr. Speaker,

In keeping with the spirit of Human Rights Day 2022, the Commission will celebrate Human Rights Day with the Bermuda Society of Arts and Warwick Academy's Student Club, "The Human Rights Project". The commemorative art exhibit invited submissions in support of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "All Human Beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights".

The opening ceremony is today. However, I encourage my Honourable colleagues and the general public to take some time and visit this exhibition which will remain open for viewing until Tuesday, January 10th 2023, at the Bermuda Society of Arts, in the City Hall Arts Centre.

Mr. Speaker,

In support of the United Nations year-long campaign the Human Rights Commission will be promoting Human Rights Day 2022, through various mediums such as radio and social media to highlight within our community this year's theme: "Dignity,

Freedom and Justice for All”. Everyone can contribute to the promotional campaign whether a corporate or private business, community partners, residents, or third sector organizations, we all can work together collectively or individually.

Mr. Speaker,

In closing, Human Rights Day 2022 and the year-long campaign can be celebrated in many ways some of which include:

- Presenting a self-advocacy workshop.
- Viewing online videos or reading books about human rights to promote self-awareness about human rights and human rights violations.
- Hosting a children’s fun and educational activity day with read-aloud sessions that focuses on children’s books about human rights issues. This activity would open the minds of our young learners.

Mr. Speaker,

This Government remains committed to advancing the promotion and protection of human rights and the fundamental freedoms in Bermuda by ensuring as a country that our laws are aligned with international human rights obligations.

Mr. Speaker,

On behalf of the Government of Bermuda I wish all residents a Happy Human Rights Day tomorrow, December 10th 2022.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**