



**JAMAICA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION
97B CHURCH STREET
KINGSTON**

**REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
TO THE 62ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE
OCEAN CORAL SPRING, DUNCANS, TRELAWNY
AUGUST 17-19, 2026**

COMPOSITION

Officers

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--------------------------|
| • Mark Malabver | - | President |
| • LaSonja Harrison | - | President-Elect |
| • Mark Smith | - | Immediate Past President |
| • Mark Nicely | - | Administrative Officer |
| • Melissa Beckford | - | Chairman |
| • Lavern Johnson | - | Member |
| • Rohan Lawrence | - | Member |
| • Roymane Robinson | - | Member |
| • Raymond Simmonds | - | Member |
| • Loretta Roberts | - | (co-opted) |
| • Sherdean Stephenson | - | (co-opted) |
| • Donique Smith-Whyte | - | (co-opted) |

MANDATE OF THE PRESIDENT

1. Develop a plan of action to guide the work of the committee.
2. To forge a partnership with universities overseas with a view to procuring scholarships for special needs, early childhood training and diagnostic training.
3. Collaborate with the JDTAN planning team, the Professional Advancement and Teacher Welfare and the Education & Research committees for the planning and execution of the 11th JDTAN Advancement in Education Summit to be held in Canada.
4. Continue to ensure that members are aware of the educational issues and concerns, developments, contributions/assistance from other regional and international unions.
5. Continue to nurture existing relationships and forge new partnerships with regional and international unions Canada, United States of America, United Kingdom.
6. Collaborate with the JTA Secretariat, the Professional Advancement and Teacher Welfare Committee (PATW), the Education and Research Committee and the Membership Committee to execute an Educational Tour to Finland.
7. Collaborate with the Education and Research Committee to plan and execute the Loma Linda Summer Conference for 2026.
8. Submit and present written reports to General Council on November 2025, March 2026, and June 2026.
9. Present a written report to the JTA's 62nd Annual Conference on or before July 1, 2026.

MEETINGS

One meeting of the Committee was held on Thursday October 9, 2025, online. The purpose of this meeting was to co-opt members according to the Terms of Reference in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

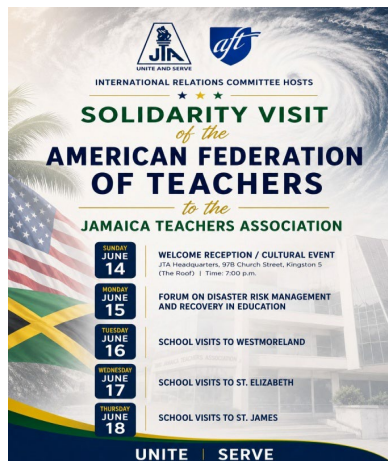
“The International Relations Committee shall consist of seven (7) persons and shall have the right to co-opt not more than three (3) persons. Matters of a regional and international nature shall fall within the purview of the International Relations Committee. It shall have responsibility for advising on same...”

The regular meeting of the Committee was scheduled to be held close to the passing of Hurricane Melissa. The decision was taken to postpone the meeting in light of the pending storm. The Committee will seek to meet face-to-face after the December break.

ACTIVITIES TO-DATE

- The Bahamas Union of Teachers paid a courtesy call to the JTA on Monday October 20, 2025. The International Relations Committee, supported by members of the administrative body were at the centre of this event hosting over 20 members of the Union. The evening included food, music and an interview with both Presidents. Subsequently, the members of the visiting delegation were hosted by St. Hugh’s High for a school visit.
- The International Relations Committee Chair has been kindly asked to sit in this capacity on the newly formed NDROC, tasked with oversight of the relief and recovery efforts of the JTA. To this end, the Committee Chair has been involved in talks with the Education International (EI), American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and Jamaica Diaspora Taskforce Action Network (JDTAN) that are expected to bring much-needed assistance to our members who have been severely affected by Hurricane Melissa.

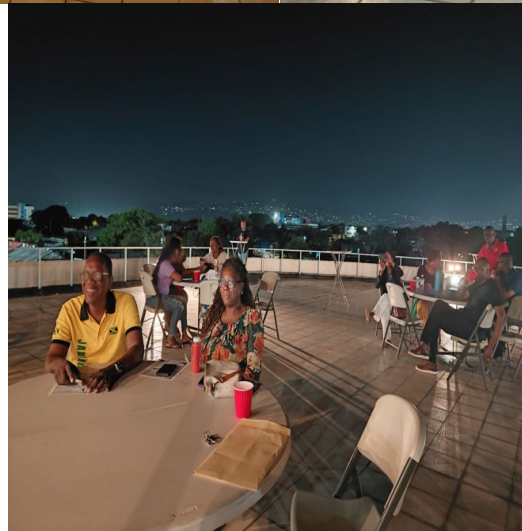
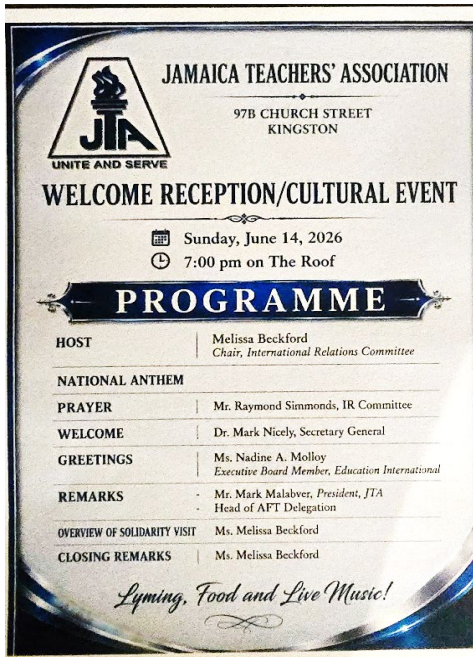
Visit of the American Federation of Teachers Sunday June 14- 19, 2026



The American Federation of Teachers visited Jamaica through its collaboration with the Jamaica Teachers’ Association on Sunday June 14-Friday June 19, 2026. The JTA has enjoyed a long-standing relationship with the AFT however, this became tangible during the 2025/2026 conference year with the passage of Hurricane Melissa. The AFT has contributed over ten million dollars in total to the assistance of JTA members through the National Disaster Recovery Oversight Committee. The Federation has also provided psychosocial support through the hosting of two online sessions for members of the JTA who have been affected by the devastation (directly or indirectly). The JTA was pleased to welcome the delegation of three

persons led by Wayne Spence, Vice-President of the American Federation of Teachers. The visit of the AFT placed the spotlight once more on the education sector as it was ravaged by the hurricane and has given valuable insight into the conditions faced by our members and students in the sector.

Day 1- Sunday June 14, 2026: Welcome Reception



The members of the IR Committee, ably assisted by The Secretary General and Mr. Doran Dixon (Asst. Secretary General), welcomed the delegation on the roof of HTA headquarters. There was much food, fun, dance and laughter as they were treated to a taste of Jamaica. President, Mark Malabver and President-Elect, LaSonja Harrison ensured that the visitors from the AFT were formally acknowledged in true Jamaican style.

Day 2 - Monday June 15, 2026: Forum- “Disaster Risk Management and Recovery in Education: Global North/South Realities”



The Forum held on Monday June 15, 2026 was live-streamed and included contributions from National Education Trust, The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management, The University of the West Indies, school administration and union representatives. The forum was comprehensive in its focus on disaster in education in several areas: curriculum, infrastructure, financing, disaster preparedness. Several articles in the Gleaner and Observer were published from the forum including on that focused on the presentation of Dr. Deon Edwards-Kerr, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Education, UWI. Her presentation made the point that the sector has been faced with a series of disasters: covid-19, Hurricane Beryl and now Hurricane Melissa. The system she posits has not recovered from any of them, resulting in a problem that is more serious than how we have viewed from a singular lens. The presentation from Mr. Rayon Simpson from Belmont Academy however, gave hope. It demonstrated what a school plant that is disaster-proof could be when auctioned by a visionary school leader. Altogether, the conversation was rich and robust and contains much that may be used to begin to craft workable solutions for the sector, located in a disaster-prone geographical zone.

June 16, 17, 18, 2026 - School Visits
Schedule of School Visits (To be finalised)

Date	Schools
Tuesday, June 16	Unity Primary, Savanna-La-Mar Primary, Petersfield Primary and Infant, Petersfield High, Cokes View Primary, Belmont Academy
Wednesday, June 17	Brompton Primary, Black River Primary and Infant, Black River High, Pondside Primary, Munro College
Thursday, June 18	Cambridge Infant, Cambridge Primary, William Knibb High, Hague Primary

The school visits demonstrated in most cases that more than seven months after the hurricane, very little improvement has been made to the infrastructure of the damaged schools. Schools have had to be on rotation as they have had to abandon whole sections of the plant. Students and teachers are clearly affected but are making the very best of the situation, even as they grapple with the fact of the start of a new hurricane season. There is an urgent need to address the issues being faced in the sector.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SCHOOL VISITS TO SCHOOLS TO WESTERN JAMAICA





CONCLUSION

The Committee has thus far completed some items on the original mandate but has also been able to pivot effectively in the midst of crisis. The Committee is very proud of its work as it continues to Unite and Serve.

Prepared and submitted by:*M. Beckford*.....
Melissa Beckford
International Relations Chair