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DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION PRESS RELEASE

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'Songs of Redemption' - Human Rights documentary depicts hard truths and musical triumph of local inmates

On February 20th, the Delegation of the European Union in Jamaica hosted the private viewing of 'Songs of Redemption'. The hard-hitting but heart warming documentary which chronicles the lives and talents of several inmates participating in the European Union funded Rehabilitation Programme at the Tower Street Adult Correctional Facility in Kingston, Jamaica. The opening night saw members of government, private sector and civil society leaders and a large representation of the diplomatic corps in attendance.

The first screening of the documentary had taken place at the Tower Street Adult Correctional Facility on December 10th, International Human Rights Day, to symbolically celebrate the award to the EU of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize, given that the programme at the prison is a small example of the work of the EU on human rights and towards peace.

The film, which has already received an award at the prestigious Pan African Film Festival in Los Angeles this week, is directed and produced by Spanish nationals, the producer being Fernando Garcia-Guereta resident in Jamaica, and documents the experiences of inmates at the Tower Street prison, circumstances that brought them in conflict with the law, the challenges they face daily, but also the hope that the Tower Street rehabilitation programme is nurturing. The rehabilitation programme is funded by the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) and allows inmates to get training and express themselves through music and lyric. Speaking at the opening night for the week's screenings at the Courtleigh Auditorium in New Kingston, EU Head of Delegation, Ambassador Paola Amadei stated **"This film is emblematic in different ways. It shows the climate of openness and the freedom of speech predominant in this country as the film makers could work uncensored. It shows how small programs can make a difference and we are proud that European Union funds can contribute to positive change and ultimately durable peace. It shows how music can create a space of personal freedom transcending the walls of prison. It shows that while personal responsibility remains crucial, human capacity for change is enormous and that it is in everybody's interest that correctional facilities develop their role of rehabilitation."**

Four of the inmates featured in the film were allowed to perform live on the evening of the event. President of The Spanish-Jamaican Foundation, H.E. Ambassador Celsa Nuño, also handed over several Musical instruments to the Tower Street Rehabilitation Programme and one trombone to one of the inmates and former student of Alpha Boys School who will leave the prison in a few weeks.

The movie is rated A-16 and viewings and has been shown to the public at no cost on Thursday and Friday (February 21-22). Special shows were also organized for students from schools in the corporate area and St. Catherine on Thursday.

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