



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

PRESENTATION BY

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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE**

AND

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**AT THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF) ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

JAMAICA: VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW (Q and A Segment)

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Written Responses: Q and A segment of Jamaica's VNR Presentation
at the ECOSOC High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development
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I. What areas of governance have been instrumental in Jamaica's resilience and recovery?

Response provided by: Dr Wayne Henry, Director General, PIOJ

Jamaica has a long history of navigating crises arising from exogenous and endogenous factors which impact macroeconomic development distinctly and therefore on the country's ability to improve domestic resilience and provide the necessary support to all dimensions of development. Coming out of the 2008 global recession, Jamaica's recovery was stymied by burgeoning debt, reaching a historic high of 147 per cent of GDP in 2013 and a worsening fiscal balance. With funding from the International Monetary Fund through an Extended Fund Facility, from 2013 and a Stand-By Agreement in 2016, Jamaica became a case study for how prudent fiscal policy can reverse course and place a country on a trajectory for growth and development.

The Economic Reform Programme was designed around five main pillars (i) structural reforms to boost growth and employment; (ii) actions to improve price and non-price competitiveness; (iii) upfront fiscal adjustment, supported by extensive fiscal reforms; (iv) debt reduction, including a debt exchange, to place public debt on a sustainable path, while protecting financial system stability; and (v) improved social protection programs.¹

¹ International Monetary Fund, 'Request for an Extended Arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility, Jamaica', April 2013

The programme's effectiveness is best measured in macroeconomic and fiscal indicators:

- Since 2013 there were 6 consecutive years of growth
- Unemployment reached an historic low in 2019 across all groups, men, women and youth.
- Public spending increased by over 40.0 per cent driven by capital projects and social programmes financed from tax revenues.

A number of fiscal measures were taken to improve the business environment and facilitate domestic consumption, through the abolition of some business taxes, increasing the consumption tax threshold for MSMEs, the personal income tax threshold and the lowering of the rate of general consumption tax (GCT). With these and other improvements, government revenues (excluding grants) up to the 2020/2021 financial year grew 81.2 per cent relative to 2012/2013. These years of reforms, which induced the economic performance and revenues led to the country entering the year of COVID-19 impact with a cash balance of J\$90 billion or 4.2 per cent of the fiscal year GDP which supported our social and economic recovery programme.

With respect to governance the Economic Programme Oversight Committee (EPOC) was established, co-chaired by the government and private sector, with membership from civil society, unions and other stakeholders. This mechanism ensures transparency and accountability.

II. How has the national development planning framework supported implementation of the SDGs and what are the next steps posts VNR?

Response provided by: Dr Wayne Henry, Director General, PIOJ

Jamaica embraced the Post-2015 Development Agenda as a key stakeholder in global partnership and commitment to long term development. The approach to negotiating

and prioritising the SDGs was guided by the existing Vision 2030 Jamaica National Development Plan (NDP), and informed the development of the National Outcome Document on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. The SDGs are implemented through the NDP which currently reflects over 98.0 per cent alignment.

The national development planning framework is a robust network that incorporates strategy design, monitoring and evaluation and implementation at the national and local levels. The implementation of the SDGs using the successive 3-year Medium-Term Socioeconomic Policy Framework (MTF), enables evaluation and analysis of medium-term results, through an iterative approach that facilitates risk management and adaptability. The integration of the SDGs in the implementation of *Vision 2030 Jamaica*, enables alignment of planning, programming, performance management, reporting and financing to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Utilising a whole of society approach, the government, private sector, civil society participate through the institutional mechanisms for local and national level implementation, as well as local and international partnerships.

The integration of the SDGs into plan implementation for *Vision 2030 Jamaica* was utilized as the foundation for preparing Jamaica's first Voluntary National Review report in 2018. The implementation of Jamaica's national development agenda, post-2018, was charted in MTF 2018-2021.

Gaps in the alignment of the SDGs with Jamaica's national development agenda identified under a 2016 Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) were also addressed under MTF 2018-2021. There was targeted focus on the "Planet" dimension of the SDGs which previously, had the lowest levels of alignment. This resulted in a more defined articulation of efforts towards advancing environmental sustainability and sustainable consumption and production. Strategic prioritization and programming geared towards advancing the blue, green, orange, and purple economies and promoting circularity in the economy was also demonstrated. Under the MTF there was full or partial

alignment between Jamaica's medium-term development agenda and relevant targets under the "Planet" dimension. There was also focus on increasing the articulation and recognition of "Partnerships" in the strategic framework for development presented in the MTF.

Under MTF 2021-2024, emphasis has been placed on improving policy this has resulted in a mapping of national and sector strategies to development results that are closer to the level of programming; thereby enabling stakeholders to align programme results, strategy, and action frameworks to that of *Vision 2030 Jamaica* and the SDGs.

Further steps in implementation will involve strengthening the evidence and results-based management systems, including the Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework and Plan for Vision 2030 Jamaica and integration of the Sustainable Development Goals, and development of an Online Monitoring Platform and accompanying mobile application, updating the Vision 2030 Jamaica Sector Plans including alignment with the SDGs and developing a Cost Estimation Framework for the MTF, and costing the MTF.

III. What is the role of south-south cooperation in achieving the 2030 Agenda and recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Response provided by: Senator the Honourable Kamina Johnson Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

Jamaica recognises multilateralism as a key to achieving the 2030 Agenda and for developing countries with common challenges, navigating these issues together improves the understanding of approaches and responses to key development issues.

We see south-south cooperation as a way to share best practise in facing common challenges, deepening cultural and information exchange and promoting regional

integration. Within the established fora, Jamaica is actively involved as a voice for SIDS, and highly indebted middle-income countries. Previously as a member of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and in negotiations among the Group of 77 and China we represent on issues of development financing, gender equity and climate change. Jamaica also participates as an active member of the ECLAC Community of Practise which facilitates exchanges with countries in the region on best practise in advancing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, and through this mechanism, deeper engagement is facilitated on issues such as development planning, monitoring and evaluation.

South-South cooperation offers opportunities to deepen dialogue on the issues which are crucial to our achieving the SDGs, including trade, education and human capital development and climate smart agricultural practices.

- Trade and export diversification

In trade diversification, we note SDG indicator 17.11.1 which targets the share of LDCs in global exports, a 2020 target that was not reached and based on current trends is unlikely to be achieved. As at end 2021, UNCTAD estimates the developing countries share of global goods and services exports reached 40.14 per cent up from 38.91 per cent in 2015. Jamaica, in 2021 imported 40.0 per cent of its goods from developing markets while exporting 19.5 per cent. South-south cooperation can increase trade diversification to bolster the economies of developing countries.

- Education and Human Capital Development

Our VNR has highlighted the salience of education and human capital development, as a key leverage point in achieving the 2030 Agenda. The impact of the pandemic has led to learning losses with long term impacts anticipated for this cohort, that requires targeted mitigation measures. Cooperation with other developing countries increases opportunities for exchange of best practises on recovery in the education sector.

South-south corporation has also supported recovery from the pandemic through the provision of vaccines from partners such as India, to respond to the health threats posed by COVID-19.

- Agriculture and Climate Change Mitigation

Many developing countries are small open economies, which face challenges in food security and rely heavily on importation for as domestic production is challenged by increases in climate related events, prolonged droughts and sporadic heavy rainfall causing floods. The high inflationary environment facing the world currently has intensified food insecurity, through increased costs of inputs and finished products. Cooperation to expand market access and knowledge transfer can address these issues.

III. What steps have been taken to strengthen evidence-based management and data collection?

Response provided by: Mrs Rochelle Whyte, Senior Technical Advisor to the Director General, PIOJ

The 2018 VNR process included an assessment of the readiness and capacity of MDAs to produce data and statistics. The assessment found that:

- MDAs are the largest producers of data usually on an annual basis
- Current system is decentralised and fragmented
- difficulties in obtaining disaggregated data from administrative data sources and
- No legislation that governs the production of statistics in Jamaica

In response, Jamaica, through its National Statistics Office (NSO), the Statistical Institute of Jamaica, is undertaking the establishment of a National Statistics System (NSS). The NSS will ensure that statistics are harmonized and coordinated between

the producing agencies to respond to the data needs of policy makers, businesses and the public. It will involve revamping the technological systems to accommodate multiagency cost sharing packages for data dissemination, and harmonising standards and definitions to facilitate data linkages, sharing and comparability.

Amendments to the National Statistics Act are ongoing which will enable STATIN to strengthen their capacity to produce quality statistics and to keep up to date with the latest advances in the world standards from statistics and data.

The process of creating a data dashboard for the SDG indicators is also ongoing. This will facilitate dissemination of data for evidenced based policy and decision making.

V. How were youth and other stakeholders (most vulnerable) engaged in developing your VNR?

Response provided by: Mrs Rochelle Whyte, Senior Technical Advisor to the Director General, PIOJ

The process to develop Jamaica's VNR was highly consultative and inclusive and was guided by a stakeholder engagement plan which targeted all major groups, including community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, youth, academia, international development partners and the private sector.

Stakeholders were engaged in developing the VNR through:

- A Community engagement series targeting community-based organizations, community development committees and community members. The engagement series focused on reviewing actions at the community level to advance the 2030 Agenda. We have recognized that there is need to strengthen dialogue and participation at this level to promote advocacy and action in the context of localizing the SDGs. The engagement series also

included engagement of the interagency networks (IAN) which are multi-stakeholder bodies that operate at the local or parish level that support service delivery within the locale. Engagement of the IANs facilitated dialogue on the SDGs and the role of local service providers and stakeholders in implementing and localizing the SDGs.

- A roundtable discussion was convened with NGOs to obtain their perspectives on the implementation of the SDGs in Jamaica as well as their role in service delivery to support implementation. The groups represented faith-based organisations, LGBT rights, sports, youth, women's rights, persons with disabilities and rural development.
- A private sector roundtable was convened to discuss corporate social responsibility and the contribution of the private sector to development. The roundtable was largely consultative to gather data on the situation of CSR in Jamaica.
- Two youth driven consultations were held with representation from across the country garnering youth perspectives on the implementation of the SDGs and Vision 2030 Jamaica and the role of youth in national development.
- We engaged the academic and IDP community in preparation and review of the draft report and conducted data collection exercises with key MDAs and other stakeholders.

VI. Question from Civil Society/NGOs – insufficient awareness by civil society

Response provided by: Mrs Rochelle Whyte, Senior Technical Advisor to the Director General, PIOJ

The implementation and monitoring of the SDGs are done through a whole of society approach. The institutional mechanism, the National 2030 Agenda Oversight Committee is comprised of representatives from all key stakeholder groups including civil society, NGOs, private sector and youth who represent the interest and voices of these stakeholders at the highest level. Stakeholder engagement is guided by a Communication and Advocacy Roadmap and through direct engagement of citizens through various fora such as the Planning Institute's Dialogue for Development series, utilized to facilitate the engagement of stakeholders across the island on key development issues. The Planning Institute also uses its programmes targeting community renewal and poverty reduction to provide an inclusive framework for engagement in these related SDGs.

The strength of these partnerships and engagement through the whole of society approach is demonstrated through the physical presence of key stakeholder groups who are part of the Jamaican delegation here at the UN to support the delivery of the second VNR. This is a practical representation of inclusivity in action.