



Building a Foundation for Growth and Prosperity

Sectoral Contribution

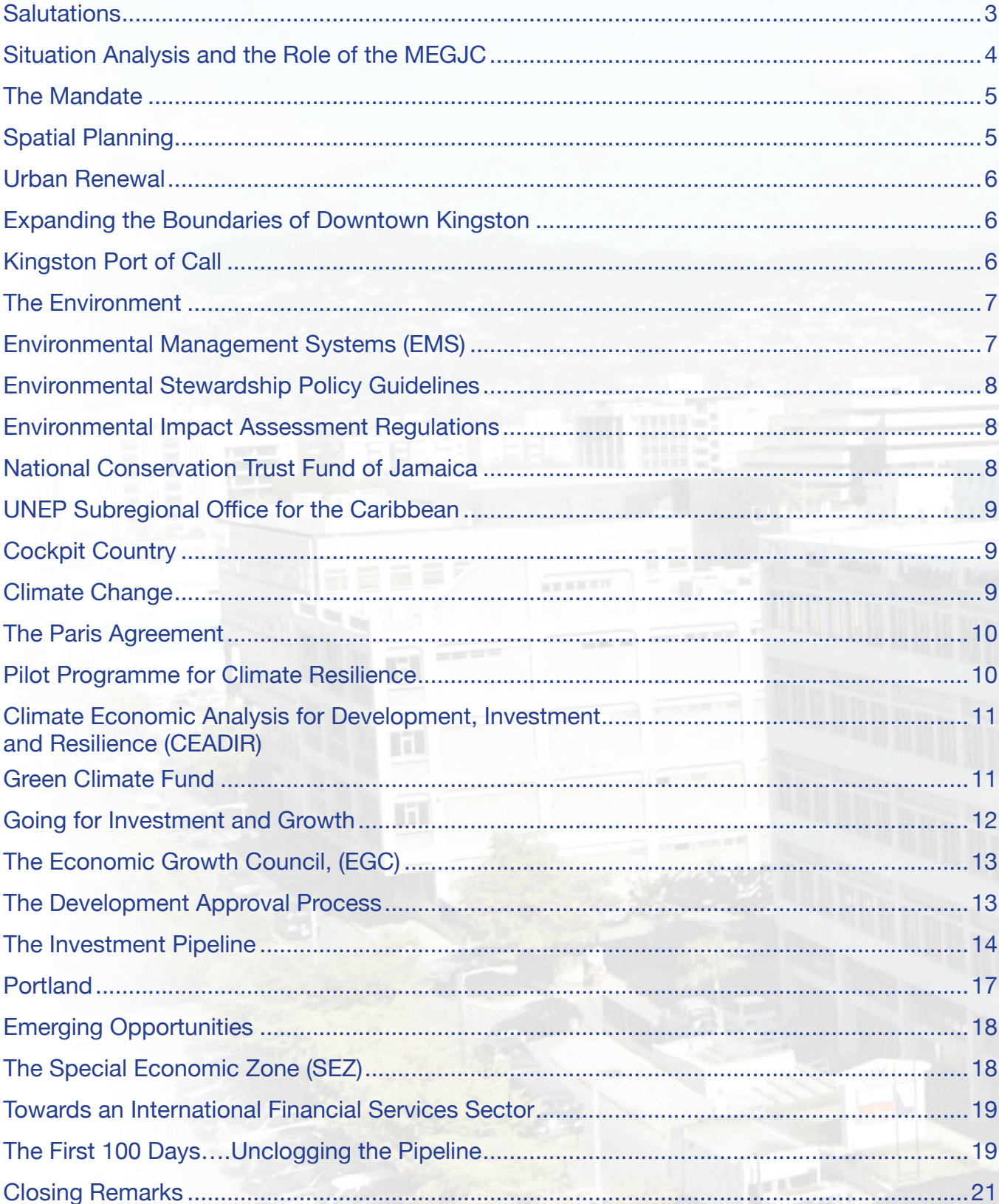
by

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Minister without Portfolio in the
Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation

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SALUTATIONS

Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to be able to contribute to these Sectoral Debates.

It is a privilege to have been returned by my constituents of West Portland to serve a third consecutive term as a member of this honourable House. Like our Prime Minister and the other members of our team, my dream for my constituency and this country is to enable the type of growth and development that will make Jamaica a prosperous nation, free from crime and violence and all the ills that have kept us back as a nation.

I was therefore honoured to take up the Prime Minister's invitation to be a part of this new Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation (MEGJC), and I valued our many conversations during the campaign period on how we could move Jamaica forward.

Mr. Speaker, teamwork is everything, and I have a great team at this new Ministry that helps me to navigate the uncharted waters.

I wish to extend heartfelt thanks to: Permanent Secretaries Audrey Sewell and Elaine Foster Allen; Director General Sharon Crooks; the Heads of Agencies and Staff of the MEGJC and the Office of the Prime Minister and the several Ministries, Agencies and local Authorities that work closely with me in the Government.

Mr. Speaker, the love and support of my family have, and will always be indispensable to my success. I wish to thank my father and mentor, Douglas Snr., for his guidance and my lovely wife, Ann-Marie, and our children for understanding my long hours away from home in the interest of giving 100% to my portfolio.

Family also means my Ministerial and Party colleagues, the people of West and East Portland, my colleague neighbouring MP, Dr. Lynvale Bloomfield; my Councillors and Councillor/Caretakers, the staff of my constituency office; the various interest and business groups, law enforcement officers and the residents of Portland, with whom we join hands and hearts.

Together we are going to put Portland back on the map as the place to live, work, raise families and do business, in keeping with the broad goals of Vision 2030. Indeed, I am proud to stand here today as a third-time member of this House. It has been a rewarding journey for me from 1986 when I began serving as a Councillor. My formula for success is simple; if you love the people, they will love you, if you respect them, they will respect you and if you serve them well, they will serve you.

Mr. Speaker, my task today is to share with this honourable House, the role and function of the new Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, and to report on matters falling under the portfolio areas for which I have responsibility. In due course, my colleague Ministers, the Honourable Dr. Horace Chang and the Honourable Clifford E. Warmington, will address the members on other areas including Water, Works and Housing, for which they have responsibility.



SITUATION ANALYSIS AND THE ROLE OF THE MEGJC

Mr. Speaker, between 2011 and 2015, we saw real GDP growth slow significantly from 1.7 to 0.8 per cent per year. Our productive sectors have experienced stagnation, with areas such as agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and services showing little or no growth.

We have been besieged by increases in prices, with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) showing an increase of 30% over the period, moving from 178.2 to 232.3, with high public debt and a resultant budget deficit of nearly J\$40 billion at the end of 2015.

While unemployment has remained stable at just over 13 per cent, the rate of unemployment among youth at over 30 per cent, is a major cause for alarm. The World Bank has stated that our economy has 'weakened' and Jamaica is 'one of the slowest growing developing countries in the world.'



Mr. Speaker, there are other constraints to growth such as crime and violence, high electricity costs, the cost of finance, and the quality of our infrastructure, which we must tackle.

Notwithstanding these challenges, **Mr. Speaker,** there are signs in 2016, that with careful management, our economy can rebound and find a path to growth.



The Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) has reported that real GDP grew by 0.9 per cent in the first quarter of this year, with agricultural production up by 2 per cent; and manufacturing up by 1.1 per cent.

There have also been notable improvements in hotels and restaurants, up by 2.7 per cent; as well as electricity and water, up by 5.4 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, against the background of the stagnation that has ravaged our economy, the Honourable Prime Minister took the strategic decision to establish the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, to address the issues which have negatively impacted our potential to increase production and employment.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that while we are using fiscal and monetary policies to stimulate the economy, we also need to augment these with approaches that deal head-on with the structural factors which have stunted our growth prospects.

THE MANDATE

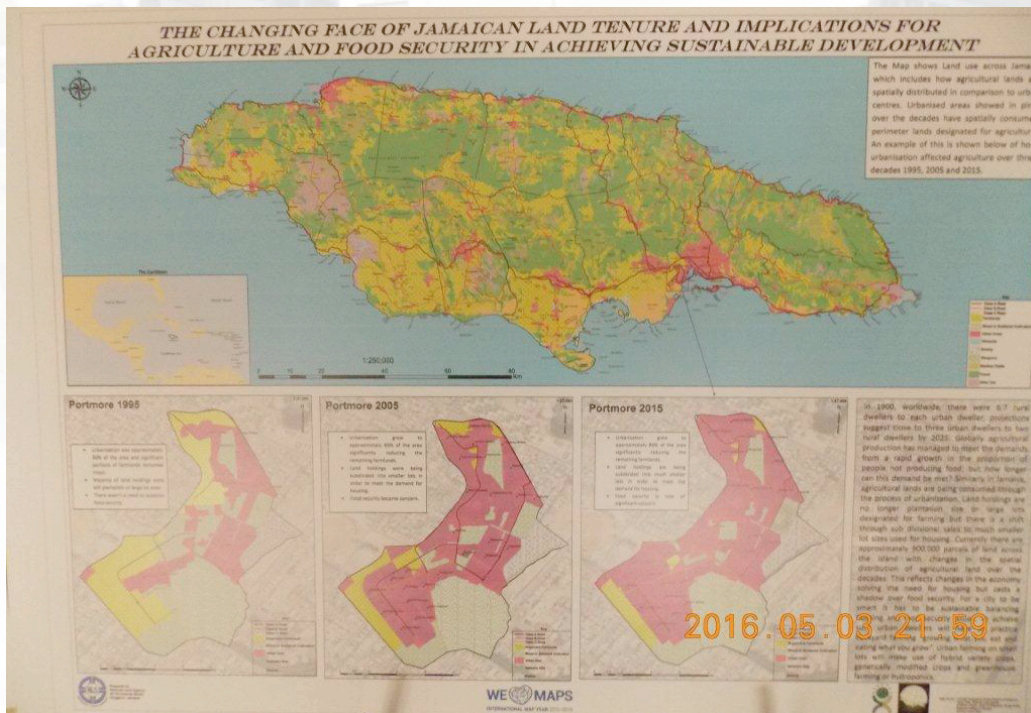
The mandate of the new Ministry, therefore, is to create the conditions to accelerate growth and job creation, and to ensure the reform of regulations to facilitate investment, generate sustainable growth and improve the quality of life of our people.

SPATIAL PLANNING

The portfolios assigned to me place, under one umbrella, key development and regulatory areas such as Land and Physical Planning, Environment and Climate Change as well as Investment.

I begin with the role of spatial planning which is crucial in creating the conditions for sustainable development. The goal is to connect communities to economic activities for balanced development across: urban, rural and semi-urban areas.

We aim to spread economic activity throughout the country so that areas of least development will begin to see avenues for generating viable enterprises.



URBAN RENEWAL

Accordingly, **Mr. Speaker**, the Urban Renewal Tax Incentive Programme is geared to promote investment in towns and newly urbanized areas that now suffer from blight.

Urban Regeneration of our capitals and towns is paramount to attracting other investments and achieving economic growth and development.



EXPANDING THE BOUNDARIES OF DOWNTOWN KINGSTON

In this regard, **Mr. Speaker**, the Government of Jamaica is committed to the development of downtown Kingston as a major commercial and cultural hub for the country.

A key element of this is establishing downtown Kingston as a tourist destination, as the country seeks to draw visitors to its diverse culture and historical value.

As a part of this drive, the Government has reviewed the boundaries, establishing the area for urban renewal benefits to local and overseas investors. We have expanded the development area to encompass the outer sections of Kingston and Port Royal. This is expected to boost efforts for the rejuvenation of downtown Kingston and address the problem of urban blight.

KINGSTON PORT OF CALL

An example of the possibilities of this direction, can be seen in a proposal currently being reviewed by the Development Bank of Jamaica, for the development of Kingston as a Cruise Ship destination.

Mr. Speaker, this involves the construction of a cruise ship pier and a dramatic revitalization and restoration of Kingston's downtown and harbour-front areas, along with existing places of interest, to a world-class standard that will attract cruise ship lines.



THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Speaker, identifying the placement of development projects to appropriately use land and absorb the labour supply is essential to our goal of achieving sustainable development.

However, we cannot achieve development without maintaining the quality of our environment. This will involve seizing the economic opportunities within the Green Economy.

Mr. Speaker, the Green Economy is defined as one that “aims at reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities, and one that aims for sustainable development without degrading the environment”.

A Green Economy Scoping study has been prepared by the Ministry, in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which examined key economic sectors, namely tourism, agriculture, energy, water and construction.

The study sought to identify opportunities to contribute to the transition towards a Green Economy, including the provision of green jobs and decent work for all.

A key next step is the development of a Green Investment Strategy. This will include identifying the necessary funding to allow for the preparation of this strategy, as well as to identify opportunities for innovation and the forging of partnerships with key stakeholders, including the private sector, on green initiatives.



ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (EMS)

In support of the transition towards a Green Economy, the Ministry will be pursuing the finalization of the National Policy and Strategy on Environmental Management Systems (EMS).

Implementation of an EMS allows an entity to green its operations which can translate into a number of benefits including:

- Greater resource and process efficiencies;
- Increased compliance with legal and regulatory requirements;
- And improved corporate image and credibility in both the national and international markets.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP POLICY GUIDELINES

In addition, the Ministry will be moving to finalize the Environmental Stewardship Policy Guidelines this financial year.

These Guidelines will provide a framework for the public sector to lead by example in streamlining its operations. This will ensure that the goods and services consumed will facilitate economic development, while at the same time minimizing any adverse effects on the environment.



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry in conjunction with NEPA, will work towards the promulgation of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations under the Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act. These Regulations will govern the preparation of EIAs and the registration of professionals that are engaged to undertake these assessments.

NATIONAL CONSERVATION TRUST FUND OF JAMAICA

Work is also ongoing on the full operationalization of the National Conservation Trust Fund of Jamaica. This Trust Fund will provide grants to public sector agencies, NGOs and CBOs involved in the management of protected areas in the country. The provision of financing through the Trust Fund will further build the capacity of key stakeholders in the management of the Island's system of protected areas. The operationalization of

the Trust Fund will complement the work currently being completed on the update of the National Protected Areas Policy and the preparation of drafting instructions for protected area legislation to govern the system of protected areas in the island.



UNEP SUBREGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE CARIBBEAN

Mr. Speaker, our international partners are critical to our efforts to preserve the environment and become climate resilient. I am pleased to report that Jamaica will be hosting the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP's) subregional office for the Caribbean.

The office will be based at the Seabed Authority Building, and will provide technical support to the countries of the Caribbean in addressing their environmental issues as well as the work programme adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly.

COCKPIT COUNTRY

Mr. Speaker, no presentation on the environment would be complete without mention of the Cockpit Country. Delineation of the boundary of the Cockpit Country is a sore issue which has attracted much public attention.

We are aware that several attempts have been made by the previous Administration to define the boundaries, but we are going to complete the process and lay the issue to rest once and for all. In this regard, a joint Cabinet Submission with the Ministry of Transport and Mining will be submitted to Cabinet shortly and members will be kept abreast of the developments.



CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to an important area that is an integral part of the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, the subject of CLIMATE CHANGE.

A key responsibility of this Ministry is to oversee and support the implementation of the Climate Change Policy Framework.

Mr. Speaker, as you may recall, the Climate Change Division (CCD) was established as the primary institution to coordinate existing and proposed initiatives to address climate change.



The overall objective of the Climate Change Policy Framework is the mainstreaming of climate change

considerations into national policies at all levels of development planning.

THE PARIS AGREEMENT

In April this year, Jamaica joined 174 countries in signing the Paris Agreement. This is a major milestone, and an indication of our commitment to actively seek ways to mitigate the effects of climate change, strengthen our resilience and reduce our overall vulnerability.

The completion of our ratification process will clear the way for numerous opportunities for funding climate change activities, including new technologies and capacity building.

But, **Mr. Speaker**, we cannot wait on the ratification process to move forward. We must seize the vast array of economic opportunities that are now open to us to enable our country to adapt to, and mitigate the effects of climate change.

Mr. Speaker, the world's greenest economies, such as Norway and Sweden, are also the richest economies in the world. They have replaced fossil fuels with renewable energy. Jamaica must grasp the opportunities available in renewable energy and technology.

The Paris Agreement will enable us to seek investment partnerships, for example, in developing the use of solar energy solutions for widespread commercial use. Clean technologies will not only assist in mitigating climate change, but will also create profitable solutions that will generate employment and stimulate economic growth and development. In other words **Mr. Speaker**, the green economy is part of the menu for promoting economic development, and Jamaica is open to green opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, billions of dollars in investment are needed to provide basic services and infrastructure to protect the environment, enhance energy efficiency and respond to climate change.

As a starting point, NEPA will benefit from US\$30 million in support from the World Bank for the Jamaica Vulnerability Risk Reduction Project, to develop a National Risk Information Platform and Coastal Risk Atlas.

Mr. Speaker, this is a vital step towards protecting the future of our nation, the livelihood of 82 per cent of our population and the 75 percent of our productive sector that live, work and do business along the coastline.

PILOT PROGRAMME FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Mr. Speaker, the Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience (PPCR) will be implemented this financial year. The PPCR is a global initiative which provides support to developing countries in the integration of climate resilience into development planning; provision of incentives for scaled-up action; and the initiation of a shift from “business as usual” to broad-based strategies for achieving climate resilience.

Jamaica's PPCR has three main Investment Programmes, namely:

- (i) Improving Climate Data and Information Management;
- (ii) Mainstreaming climate change adaptation in sectoral and national plans, and implementing integrated adaptation strategies in a targeted river basin; and
- (iii) Establishing Innovative financing mechanisms to support the implementation of adaptation initiatives.

The project is funded from the Climate Investment Fund (CIF) through the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The PIOJ has overall responsibility for administering the national PPCR in Jamaica.

CLIMATE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS FOR DEVELOPMENT, INVESTMENT AND RESILIENCE (CEADIR)

The Climate Economic Analysis for Development, Investment and Resilience (CEADIR) Project is a four and a half year USAID global support project with a focus on furthering climate change investment and economic analysis. CEADIR works with developing countries globally to strengthen economic assessments and help to mobilize funding for transformative and sustainable development by providing technical assistance and local capacity building.

CEADIR will aid the Government of Jamaica in conducting climate-resilient sector planning for the energy, transport, waste management and financial sectors.

The purpose of the sector planning will be to analyze the aforementioned sectors to facilitate the identification of opportunities for building climate resilience.

GREEN CLIMATE FUND

We are also tapping into the international climate change finance mechanism, the Green Climate Fund, to advance our readiness programme for accessing available climate change financing for public and private sector entities.

Last week, the Ministry in partnership with the German Institute (GIZ) and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Co-operation staged a workshop on climate finance options and conditions as well as information on how to access the Green Climate Fund. Let me emphasize, **Mr. Speaker**, that not only public sector entities, but private sector entities will have access to the (GCF).

Over J\$37 million in 'readiness financing' is being secured to ensure systems are put in place that will allow us to access additional funds earmarked for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to fund adaptation and mitigation projects.

These readiness financing funds will put Jamaica in good stead to implement the various projects to make the country more climate change resilient.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Speaker, as we join the global thrust towards climate change adaptation and mitigation, and the preservation of the environment, there are many opportunities in renewable energy and technologies, as well as environmental goods and services, that will allow us to generate green growth.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we must seek out and attract mega renewable energy investments that can "green" our economy.

Mr. Speaker, currently, we are reviewing expressions of interest in energy. JAMPRO is currently working on energy projects totalling J\$1.6billion.

GOING FOR INVESTMENT AND GROWTH

Ease of Doing Business

Mr. Speaker, the Ease-of-Doing-Business Index for Latin America and the Caribbean has registered some improvement, with Jamaica moving seven places over our ranking in 2015. This is welcomed, but in order to meet our growth target and attract the investment we need to achieve prosperity for Jamaica, we will have to do much better than this.

Mr. Speaker, the way we do business must change to allow existing and potential investors to implement development in a timely manner and without bureaucratic hassle.



We have already started the work to remove the structural barriers which have significantly delayed the start-up of many projects.

With agencies such as JAMPRO, the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), the PIOJ, the National Land Agency (NLA), the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), the Factories Corporation of Jamaica, the Development Bank of Jamaica and the EXIM Bank under one Ministerial umbrella, the MEGJC will identify and create GROWTH CENTRES in the economy, enabling the development processes to work.

THE ECONOMIC GROWTH COUNCIL (EGC)

Mr. Speaker, for too long, the onus has been on investors to go through the frustration of getting their projects off the ground. The new dispensation being spearheaded by the Ministry will work assiduously to change the red tape to a red carpet for investors.

In this regard, the Economic Growth Council (EGC), chaired by Mr. Michael Lee-Chin is an important innovation towards building the public-private partnerships that are necessary for driving the growth agenda and removing the barriers that have retarded growth for so long.

Through the Council, the MEGJC will target major local and international projects. Once they meet all the requirements, the MEGJC will help to fast-track these projects.

The appraisal process for major projects will be coordinated by a special unit in the Ministry. The Council has met with some 35 key public and private stakeholder groups, and reports from the meeting have been encouraging, as they have pledged full support to the EGC.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a competitive world. Gone are the days of beating the pavement to secure development. In today's world, we must have influence that can open doors. This is what Mr. Lee-Chin and his team represent, and they have set a target of 5% annual GDP growth by 2020.

THE DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCESS

Mr. Speaker, as we raise the 'open for business' sign to attract investors, we must simultaneously and rapidly improve the quality of the business and investment environment.

The goal is to reduce the approval time so as to conform to the 90-day standard we have set. As it now stands, the development approval process can take up to 2 and 3 times longer than the standard. This is a major obstacle and a clear disincentive for investors, large and small.

This year we aim to expedite the pace at which our Development Approvals Process (DAP) works. Emphasis is being placed on reducing the decision-making time.

Mr. Speaker, this Administration is committed to continuing the implementation of the recommendations of Cabinet Decision #40/15 to improve our Development Approvals Process.

A draft Implementation Plan including timelines for the implementation of the recommendations was completed and is now being finalized for the Cabinet's approval and implementation.

Mr. Speaker, one of the recommendations is the establishment of a Multi-Agency Joint Technical Team (MJTT) which will assess the following applications once they have been received by the relevant Parish Council:

- All Planning and Building applications, 21 units or more (housing schemes, apartments, town houses, hotels, etc.) that do not conform with the permitted development.
- All subdivision applications, 21 lots or more.
- All planning applications for power plants, factories, offices and commercial buildings over 10,000 square metres.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative will facilitate the quick and coordinated review of applications, especially for major projects that can impact growth and job creation.

Along with this, NEPA is accelerating the upgrading of its Applications Management and Data Automation – AMANDA system, to enhance the development review process, in keeping with our 90-day standard and to allow developers to submit applications online. Eventually, developers will be able to track the status of their applications.

THE INVESTMENT PIPELINE

Mr. Speaker, we are all aware that direct capital investment is vital to move the productive sector to real growth, by increasing output and mobilising job creation. Investment promotion and facilitation form the central platform of this Ministry.

Although we face many challenges, there are many opportunities for development all across the island.



Business Process Outsourcing



One of our most promising opportunities is in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Business Process Outsourcing (BPO).

Since 2011, Jamaica's BPO industry has experienced tremendous growth, with over 40 companies operating in the ICT/BPO sector.

Employment has moved from approximately 12,000 persons in 2011 to over 21,000 at the end of 2015. JAMPRO has led the way in facilitating the development of this sector. At present, there are several projects coming on stream:

1. The Naggo Head Technology Park which involves the development of twenty-six (26) acres of land on a phased basis in Naggo Head, St. Catherine. This includes the first phase of 120,000 sq. ft. of space, for usage by the ICT/BPO sector, which will be implemented this fiscal year.

It will offer world-class ICT/BPO facilities and also allow for maximum return on investment with the appropriate economies of scale. The Park will also facilitate an appropriate mix of industry and services for optimum functionality.

The Naggo Head Tech Park will benefit from excellent roads, utility and modern telecommunications infrastructure, as well as fibre-optic connectivity.

Mr. Speaker, we will spend approximately J\$14 million on infrastructural work related to Phase one of the project, which is already underway and approximately J\$180 million on infrastructure for the entire Park. It is anticipated that some 20,000 jobs will be created when the Tech Park is completed.



2. The Port Authority of Jamaica (PAJ) accounts for over 50% of Jamaica's BPO market. To date, the PAJ has an investment of J\$9.8 billion in BPO facilities, with plans to invest an additional J\$4.1 billion in the next 2 years commencing in 2016/2017.

These include:

- Expansion of BPO space in Montego Bay with an additional – 63,000 sq. ft. Building development will commence shortly and is estimated to be completed in March 2017
- BPO facility– Portmore. This development, consists of four (4) buildings totalling approximately 150,000 sq. ft. Fabrication will begin in August 2016 with installation of the first building commencing in November 2016.

All four buildings are projected to be completed by May 2017.

The marketing of the new spaces for both sites has already begun and one commitment has been secured for the ground floor of the 63,000 sq. ft. building in Montego Bay.

Discussions have also started with the tenants at the Portmore Informatics Park to provide them with additional space to expand their businesses.

The PAJ is also preparing to open a BPOs incubator in Kingston to supplement the marketing of the Portmore facilities, and has sought approval to utilize 2,400 sq. ft. of space that was refurbished by the PAJ in the Air Jamaica building on Duke Street. This facility will provide a 'plug n play' and training facility for new tenants who will transition to the Portmore facility upon completion.

Other opportunities in the outsourcing industry will expand in 2016, with additional construction projects by Mussons and Grace Kennedy in Kingston, as well as Caribbean Resource Ltd., Barnett Tech Constructing and Bioprist in Montego Bay.



3. Additionally, the **Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ)** has secured PetroCaribe funds for on-lending, in order to support the construction of BPO facilities. This will encourage developers to build space to attract operators which will boost our ICT/BPO profile.

So far, the DBJ has approved loans valued at US\$56 million for 11 projects to create 771,550 sq. ft. which are expected to create 17,000 jobs when completed. For the current year, the DBJ is expected to provide US\$20 million which will add an additional 4,000 jobs.

JAMPRO projects that total investment this year in this sector will be over US\$50 million and that at least 4,000 jobs will be created this year not including the construction jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that investments such as these are not limited to the two main business centres in Kingston and Montego Bay. For example, Portland and the surrounding parishes will see the establishment of a call centre in Port Antonio. The facility has been identified and one operator confirmed. We

expect a spin-off employment impact on this part of the island.

4. **Mr. Speaker**, investment is also slated for the development of our tourism infrastructure. **The Main Street Improvement and Ocho Rios Promenade Development** are the final two phases of the **“Turtle River Walk” improvement** project led by the UDC. These final two phases will be funded by the TEF and are to be implemented in the fiscal year 2016/2017 at a construction cost of J\$350 million, with a total direct employment of approximately 80 persons.

PORTLAND

Mr. Speaker, we also envisage development projects in other tourist areas such as Portland.

It is expected that in this fiscal year, a programme of rehabilitation for the road network in Portland will begin. This is an interim measure to an overall plan to provide greater access to various areas of the parish.

The programme will run from Harbour View to Morant Bay. It will make attractions in the parish more accessible, opening up the way for more tour operators to access the interior, and advance ecotourism in places like the Buff Bay Valley.



In addition, an agreement has been reached with Sandals Resorts International to facilitate the reopening of the **Dragon Bay Hotel**, on the understanding that the Ian Fleming Airport will be upgraded to accommodate regional carriers. The move is expected to result in the upgrading of properties in the area, to take advantage of increased tourist flows.

These improvements slated for Portland, along with the BPO project, are expected to positively impact the livelihood of the citizens of the parish.

In this regard, **Mr. Speaker**, we intend to reposition the production of our world-famous Blue Mountain coffee.

The parish of Portland is one of only three, where Blue Mountain coffee can be found.

Coffee represents the economic background of many farmers in my constituency. However, the sector has been severely challenged by cheap imports. We want to put a stop to this and restore our local Blue Mountain coffee to its pride of place. We say 'Produce and Export' so that Jamaica can benefit from more jobs and more foreign exchange.

EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES

Mr. Speaker, our economic opportunities are not limited nor are they scarce. With the establishment of the Cannabis Licensing Authority (CLA), we may now have one of the best opportunities to enter huge new markets for start-ups.

In 2015, Forbes Magazine reported that up to US\$1.9 billion of cannabis was sold in the United States for medical use. This is expected to climb to US\$8 billion by 2018.

At this point, there is room for **innovators** and **investors**, to establish medical dispensaries, legal recreational retailers, edible and infused products, hemp products, and various spin-offs such as financial services for cannabis businesses, transport and security, and consulting services for setting up businesses.



To date, the CLA has received over 200 applications from interested investors.

Mr. Speaker, this is a wave we have to ride in order to benefit from the boom in this emerging industry.

THE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE (SEZ)

The SEZ Act was passed in January 2016 as a key prong in Jamaica's strategy to establish itself as a logistics based economy. In the next few weeks, an announcement will be made as to the date when the Act will take effect.

This will allow for a new flow of investments into Jamaica and a new approach to attracting investments, while ensuring that investors make a meaningful contribution to Jamaica's growth and development plans.

The SEZs are geared to ensuring that the benefits of the economic activity are felt throughout the country. They are poised to drive exponential growth in the outsourcing industry while reinvigorating Jamaica's manufacturing industry and expanding our logistics industry.

To facilitate this, the MEGJC has appointed the Free Zone Council to approve Free Zone applications including BPOs. Since May 2016, applications for three new business process outsourcing companies have been approved. Cumulatively, these companies represent employment for approximately 12,000 persons.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that these jobs are not just entry level, but will require technical staff at the middle and upper end, so that our graduates from the universities can be suitably employed.

TOWARDS AN INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SERVICES SECTOR



中国港湾工程有限责任公司
China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd.



As we become more integrated in the global economy, it is important that we establish Jamaica as a viable alternative in the international financial services sector.

This has been in training for some time. This Ministry is supportive of the JIFSA legislation and the proposed tax policy that will give full effect to the Jamaica International Financial Services hub.

We want to ensure that our services are fully in line with international regulations and expectations, in order to take full advantage of the provision of financial services.

Mr. Speaker, seven pieces of legislation have been drafted which we will aggressively push through to enactment, namely the:

1. International Business Companies Bill
2. General Partnerships Bill
3. Limited Partnerships Bill
4. Trust and Corporate Service Providers Bill
5. Segregated Accounts Companies Bill
6. Limited Liability Companies Bill and
7. Trust Bill

THE FIRST 100 DAYS....UNCLOGGING THE PIPELINE

Mr. Speaker, this Ministry is faced with the unique situation of having too many economically viable projects

stuck in the pipeline. The first 100 days of Government have provided the opportunity for assessment and to begin the process of unclogging the pipeline.

We aim to remove the barriers and get these projects off the ground while we redouble our efforts to attract new investments to achieve the five in four growth target set by the EGC.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking at several investment projects which will include public and private partnerships that span several sectors. The total investment package under consideration is well over 800 billion Jamaican dollars with a job creation potential of over 80,000 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, this Administration is committed to doing all that is necessary to bring these projects to fruition.

In the first 100 days, we have already impacted the movement of the following projects.

1. **Mr. Speaker, Harmony Cove** has been in the pipeline for a very long time. We are far advanced in settling issues related to Government's equity investment in the project and a Cabinet Submission paving the way for Tavistock Jamaica to commence implementation is to go to Cabinet shortly. After more than a decade, this project is finally seeing some light. This joint venture partnership will see the construction of a multidimensional resort development at a cost of US\$907 million. It will provide an estimated 2,000 jobs.

Upon finalization of all the provisions of partnership, construction will commence within twelve months.

2. **Navy Island:** the Ministry has held talks with parties interested in a new project, the acquisition of Navy Island in Portland. The intention is to construct a mixed-use development to include a high-end boutique hotel and spa, residential villas, a medical centre for plastic surgery and a non-surgical cosmetic care centre, as well as an eco-farm. The projected investment of this development is up to US\$90 million to generate more than 800 jobs.
3. **Celebration Jamaica Hotel and Resort** has been almost five years in the making. Since assuming office, this Administration has given approval for an application for a temporary licence for Casino Gambling, and a submission is to go before Cabinet shortly, with regard to the concluding details of this project. This project is part of the wider Integrated Resort Development and has an estimated development cost of US\$450 million. The first phase of the project will result in the employment of 2,000 persons and will involve construction of 1,000 hotel rooms in Montego Bay, with future expansion of another 1,000 hotel rooms in Phase 2.
4. The Ministry has facilitated talks between the KSAC and PA Benjamin to expand factory space to increase productive capacity. The total amount to be invested for this project is approximately US\$25 million.
5. **Heineken Group** plans to invest US\$31.5 million between 2016 and 2020, in Cassava Project Grow, to develop a sustainable cassava starch supply chain with some 3,000 acres of cassava under cultivation and agro-processing capacity of 100 root tons/day.

With my intervention and working with the Agriculture Investment Corporation, we were quickly able to provide 100 acres at Spring Plain, another 100 acres at Fort George in St. Mary and 400 acres at Bernard Lodge.

This project will see the permanent employment of 162 persons on Heineken's cassava farms, and training of 1,000 persons over the next four years. Heineken will pursue contract farming arrangements with an additional

200 farmers and assist with financial support to small and medium farmers in the form of inputs, such as fertilizer and pesticides.

6. **Mr. Speaker**, as part of the collaboration with the People's Republic of China, 1,200 acres were promised to that Government by Cabinet Decision for the development of Hotels comprising approximately 2,300 rooms, villas and recreational facilities in Mammee Bay; large-scale residential accommodations (low and high density); and BPO facilities in Caymanas.

We are working to have the land transferred to them shortly so that they will be able to build out the hotels and housing. Please note, **Mr. Speaker**, that the transfer of the land is conditional on immediate plans for the development of both prospective locations. In the meantime, we are discussing additional areas of investment and cooperation.

CLOSING REMARKS

Mr. Speaker, meaningful Growth and Job Creation are not impossible! We must tackle the obstacles and meet the challenges. Our analysis shows tremendous potential investment opportunities.

We intend to meet the growth target set by the EGC of five percent in four years growth through concerted effort to promote and facilitate investment in all sectors of the economy and the implementation of reforms to remove the systemic obstacles to growth.

This Ministry will, over the coming months, work closely with all the Ministries, Departments and Agencies to increase productivity in the sectors that are the traditional drivers of our economy – tourism, agriculture and mining. At the same time we must try to make better use of our tremendous human resources, physical assets and the potential of our Diaspora to drive growth and job creation.

We must focus on building the capacity of, and facilitating the access to finance of our MSMEs which are the backbone to the growth of any economy.

We will pursue a research and development agenda in the key areas of energy, science and technology, to foster innovation and the development of new products and processes.

We will redouble the efforts to reduce youth unemployment through traditional and innovative approaches aimed at building their education and skills levels.

We will ensure that the investment drive in the BPO, tourism and creative industries make a dent in the high levels of unemployment among our youth and fully engage the entrepreneurial capacity of our young people.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to tackling the barriers to growth; an uncompetitive business environment, crime and violence, poor allocation of our assets and most of all we will convert talk, studies and plans into concrete actions to deliver growth and prosperity to the Jamaican people.

We believe that the Jamaican people are tired of stagnation and inflation. People want to experience prosperity and are willing to work towards making it happen.

Therefore, **Mr. Speaker**, we must all see ourselves and our inputs as part of the solution. Whether we work in the fields, in factories, in the Government services, in the banks, or on the road – we are all part of the solution for growth.

Vision and Determination

Mr. Speaker, the drive towards placing Jamaica on a path to sustainable development is as much vision as action.

We all must try to grasp the possibilities of this nation and work towards them, in whatever way we can putting Jamaica first and all other considerations after.

Mr. Speaker, I put it to members of this honourable House...

If you could position Jamaica anywhere on Earth, where would you pick?

Right here... close to the largest economy in the world, between North and South America, with the 7th largest natural harbour in the world.

If you could choose an ideal time zone for Jamaica, what would you choose?

Eastern Standard Time, the same as the East Coast of the United States.

If you could choose any official language for Jamaica, which language would you choose? English

If you could select soil and topography to your choosing, what would you ask for?

Rich, fertile soil in the valleys and plains. and beautiful mountain sides that can grow just about anything.

If you could select the beaches what would you want?

Beautiful white sand beaches.

If you could select the creative talent of Jamaica, who would you choose?

Bob Marley, Usain Bolt, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, Herb McKenley, Tessanne Chin, the Hon. Louise Bennett Coverley, "Miss Lou"; Professor Rex Nettleford, Olive Lewin, the Rt. Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey, to name but a few.

And what about the people who make up the country?

People who excel all over the world in countless fields of endeavour and create dynamic brand recognition, several times larger than the country.

Indeed, If you could have all these advantages, where would you expect the country to be ranked in GDP growth?

Top five or top ten

How ironic it is, **Mr. Speaker**, that Jamaica has all the elements on this wish list, and finds itself nowhere close to its true potential.

We are not there, Mr. Speaker, because of decades of bad policy decisions, poor implementation of policy and ultimately, lack of determination, discipline and the will to really put the country first.

Mr. Speaker, in order to achieve the paradigm shift sought by the creation of this Ministry, we must find a way to make building Jamaica for the good of all be earnestly our number one priority as a nation. Then and only then, will we truly reap the prosperity we all so desperately seek.

PICTORAL HIGHLIGHTS



