



SECTORAL PRESENTATION BY

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MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO

(LAND, ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND INVESTMENT)
IN THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

“CREATING JOBS – EMPOWERING JAMAICANS”

OPENING

It is said that “no man is an island, no man stands alone” and so once again, it is with an overwhelming sense of gratitude that I address this noble House, fully cognizant that my presence here is due to the input of a number of persons who have championed and supported my efforts on behalf of the Government and people of this beautiful island, Jamaica, land we love.

I remain grateful to the Most Hon. Prime Minister, who continues to display faith in my ability to oversee the Land, Environment, Climate Change Portfolios in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation.

My family, my father Douglas Vaz, my mother Sonia who is also here, my wife Ann-Marie, soon to be my neighboring MP in East Portland; and my five children are steadfast and unrelenting in their support of me, and I thank them for their love and patience as I carry out my duties on behalf of the people of Jamaica.

I want to acknowledge and commend the dedicated team of professionals at the Ministry led by Permanent Secretary Audrey Sewell, Director General Dr. Sharon Crooks, as well as the Heads of Agencies and Branches at the Ministry. They are our soldiers in the trenches. Their work makes me look good, and so I thank them for their support.

My team of administrative professionals, both at the OPM and at the Ministry, Pat Reid, Diana Daly, Cheryl Leach, Sherell Atkinson, Gavin Powell and Locksley Smith, bring order to my hectic schedule and I thank them for being the backbone of my office.

I also want to thank my security detail Corp. Warren Chong and Corp. Phillip Hamilton, who carry out their duties with dedication and discipline.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend and thank you for your fairness and impartiality as you preside over the sittings of this honourable House. I also want to acknowledge my colleagues on both sides of the divide. I agree that we may not always see eye to eye, but what we do is for a far greater good than ourselves, and so tempers may flare from time to time, but respect is due!

Mr Speaker, I must mention my four JLP Councillors in West Portland, and three in East Portland, in a 7-2 JLP controlled Council. However, I want to especially mention PNP Councillor Dexter Rowland from Port Antonio, who happens to be longest serving Councillor in the Portland Municipal Council and the longest consecutive serving Councillor in Jamaica. My congratulations to Councillor Rowland.

Last, but by no means least I want to thank my constituents, the wonderful people of Western Portland who have chosen me to represent their interests in this House for eleven (11) years. I am humbled by their support and vow to continue to represent them to the best of my ability as we work together to make Portland a model of social and economic growth and development.

PORTLAND



Mr. Speaker, I will start my presentation not in the usual way of highlighting all the achievements in my constituency which are too numerous to list, but rather to speak to the overall parish of Portland and the vision and holistic plan that this Andrew Holness-led government has. The plan to upgrade and uplift Portland to create job opportunities is a priority. I have therefore been at the forefront of several major projects for the region including the Ian Fleming Airport expansion, linked to the re-opening of the Dragon Bay Hotel by Sandals Resorts International; the St Thomas development project being undertaken by the UDC; the South Coast Highway project, as well as the Junction Road repairs and expansion .

Let me begin with the planned infrastructure for roads, air and sea.

- **Southern Coastal Highway Improvement Project**
- **Junction**
- **Papine to Buff Bay**
- **Ian Flemming**
- **Errol Flynn Marina**
- **Navy island**

Port Antonio

Let me turn to the capital of Portland, Port Antonio which is bursting at the seams because of a lack of planning. The Opposition has controlled the East Portland seat for 28 straight years and West Portland for 18 of 28 years. Against this background, let me now tell you about the plans of this JLP administration since being in office for two (2) years.

- **Upgrading of Police Stations**
- **Carder Park**
- **Government Business Center**
- **Municipal building**
- **Sewage**
- **Tourism**
- **Call Center**
- **Agriculture**

This Andrew Holness-led Government is **putting Portland back on the forefront, to remove the stigma as the forgotten parish.**

It is our intention to realize the full potential of the parish of Portland and surrounding areas in order to tap fully into the vast eco-tourism and agricultural potential, on the foundation of a healthy and educated population, with easy access and modern infrastructure to attract investments and create well paying jobs. We are **Creating Jobs - Empowering Jamaicans**



GROWTH

Growth Trending Upwards



Growth with jobs is the primary aim of this administration. The preliminary projection for growth for the 2017/2018 financial year is 0.9 percent. The Planning Institute of Jamaica is currently in the process of collecting information and data for the last quarter of the 2017-2018 fiscal year (January-March 2018) and this could lead to a revision of the PIOJ's growth projection for the period.

However, the PIOJ is projecting real growth of 2.5 percent for the 2018/2019 fiscal year. This figure is based on several factors including:-

- The continued strengthening of most industries
- Increased local demand associated with projected higher employment levels and investment
- Growth in external demand for Jamaica's goods and services

- Strengthening of competitiveness in some industries following the upgrading of plants during the previous year.
- Improvements in the business environment
- The roll-out of major strategic investment projects and
- Recovery from the negative impact of flooding and excessive rainfall in the 2017/18 financial year.

For the 2019/2020 fiscal year, the PIOJ is projecting economic growth of 3.0 percent, as against 5 in 4, reflecting growth in all industries with the exception of Producers of Government Services due to the fiscal consolidation programme being pursued by the GOJ. It is expected that growth will be propelled by increased capital utilization in some industries as a result of higher local and external demand.

Unemployment Trending Downwards

We are reaping success from the plans and programmes that we have put in place in partnership with the private sector.

The proof of the pudding is the unemployment rate which I am happy to say, continues to trend downwards. STATIN is reporting that in January the rate was 9.6 percent, the lowest it has been since October 2008. This represents a decrease of 3.1 percentage points when compared with 12.7 per cent in January 2017.

In the same period, the unemployment rate for males decreased by 1.5 percentage points, from 9.0 per cent to 7.5 per cent while the rate for females had a larger decline (4.9 percentage points), from 17.0 per cent to 12.1 per cent.

The unemployment rate for youth was 23.8 per cent in January 2018, representing a decrease of 7.4 percentage points, when compared to the rate of 31.2 per cent in January 2017. **We will not stop until all the figures are in single digits.**

It is important to note that most of those who gained employment were non-government employees. This is consistent with the GOJ goal for the private sector to be the principal engine of economic growth. We are **Creating Jobs – Empowering Jamaicans**



INVESTMENT

BPO/Outsourcing



One of the driving forces behind the lowered unemployment rate is, outsourcing which the Government has identified as a key pillar of the country's Economic Growth and Job Creation Strategy.

The ICT/BPO sector continues to be a high performing segment of Jamaica's services industries, and has enjoyed the highest employment growth rate of any sector in the last decade.

Currently, over 60 companies offer call centre and BPO services, and they account for more than 26,000 jobs across the island.

We had already surpassed our target of 11,000 jobs for the 2017/2018 fiscal year, with a forecast of 11,665 jobs created as at November 2017 and we anticipate even further growth in the sector this year.

Several initiatives have been undertaken by this administration, to successfully implement the five year National Strategy. They include the formation of the IT-BPO Task Force and the National BPO Co-ordinator to drive, oversee implementation, and update the development work plan for the BPO industry.

We are also moving to strengthen the enabling environment for the sector including the Policy and Legislative Framework; Labour Market Enhancement; Infrastructure Development and Market Penetration.

The Development Bank of Jamaica, recently committed US\$73 million to finance 15 BPO projects islandwide. To date, the DBJ has disbursed over US\$56.7 million to the BPO Sector, which is roughly 78 percent of its total loan commitments.

Those loans have led to the creation of approximately one point one (1.1) million square feet of BPO commercial space, with a projected 24,520 jobs to be created when all projects are completed

Last year we commenced our development of new spaces in Montego Bay and Portmore to create over 6,000 new job opportunities.

The Factories Corporation of Jamaica (FCJ) has undertaken to design and construct some 750,000 square feet of BPO space on 34 acres with a target of approximately 20,000 jobs. Among them, is the Naggo Head Technology Park. Over two acres of land has been secured and construction has already begun on the tech park. Phase one will provide an additional 120-thousand square feet in outsourcing space.

The FCJ has already received approvals for the project and is at the final stage of preparing the Joint Venture Agreement to be approved by Cabinet.

The Naggo Head Technology Park will be the first of its kind in the English Speaking Caribbean and will house a diverse group of BPO companies supported by critical support services such as rooms and boarding, a day care centre, gymnasium, restaurant, internet cafes, homework centre, retail outlets, among other facilities.

Opportunities for Tertiary Graduates



We have also begun to diversify the type of work performed in Jamaica to create more opportunities for tertiary graduates. In this regard, the PAJ through its Free Zones will be working closely with the HEART Trust and the Business Process Industry Association of Jamaica (BPIAJ) to develop a second phase Incubator geared towards knowledge services and technology type work.

The PAJ has also supported and participated in activities to create a skills development programme to support global services in Jamaica.

This will be funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and will see the implementation of a finishing school among other things to improve the employability gaps in BPO.

The sky is the limit for the BPO sector and we intend to capitalize on every aspect of this lucrative industry for the benefit of Jamaica and Jamaicans. **We are Creating Jobs- Empowering Jamaicans.**

Demand for Commercial and Industrial Space

There has been a sustained increase in the demand for commercial and industrial spaces in Jamaica that is due largely to the upsurge in investment. Last year alone, the demand for space was 470,000 square feet island wide.

At Garmex Free Zone, the largest commercial complex on the island, prospective investors demanded over 241,000 square feet of production space last year.



This high demand for space is also reflected in the increase in occupancy from 86% to 93% over the last twelve (12) months in facilities established by the Factories Corporation of Jamaica (FCJ).

The Government has mandated the Board of FCJ to focus on the implementation of three (3) enterprise projects, which will see the construction of over 1.5 million square feet of space over the next three (3) to five (5) years dedicated to agro-processing, business process outsourcing, manufacturing and warehousing. Thirty percent (30%) of this space will be dedicated to small and medium size enterprises. The multi-dimensional focus of the undertaking is noteworthy.

Caymanas Special Economic Zone

A comprehensive feasibility study for the Caymanas Special Economic Zone will be completed in July. The study considers the best uses (industrial, ICT, transshipment, commercial, worker housing, etc.) and development phasing of the 1,200 acre (485.62 hectare) CSEZ site (on the South Side), in a manner that is financially feasible for a private developer, PPP, or other arrangement. The flagship zone will operate under the rubric of Jamaica's SEZ and PPP policies.

The Development Application Review Process

The Development Application Review Process (DARP) is undoubtedly critical to the construction sector as well as the development of an economy. The Doing Business Report states that the efficiency of the construction regulations must be such that there is a reduction in the possible constraints on the sector which could lead to excessive cost in time and money for potential investors.

Improvements to the Development Application Review Process are one of the many initiatives being undertaken by the Government to improve its economic performance whilst transforming the nation's interests.

The Development Assistance Centre (DAC)

The Development Assistance Centre was formally launched on March 16, 2011 after one year of operation as a pilot project under a public-private partnership between the Government of Jamaica (GOJ), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce Regs/Legs Project.

The strategic objective of the DAC is to strengthen the development approval process through pre-application consultation and facilitation. As such the main purpose of the DAC is to assist developers of “large projects” to adequately prepare their projects to achieve approval within the GOJ’s 90-day process target after formal application.

The National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), for the five year period, has been able to achieve 76% for those applications that are processed within the stipulated timeline of 90 days. It is noteworthy that approximately 80% of development proposals processed by the DAC for which applications have been made, were determined within 90 days since its implementation.

Challenges

Notwithstanding the efforts made to improve and modernize the development approval process, the process continues to be constrained by the submission of development proposals that do not comply with the established standards, policies and guidelines as outlined in the Development and Investment Manual, Development Orders and other related documents. This has contributed to significant delays.

It is mandatory that all designs and drawings are to be prepared by, or certified by, a locally registered professional (Architect, Engineer, Land Surveyor). Other areas that have been identified for improvements include:

- Untimely provision of requested additional information from clients
- Untimely response by commenting Agencies responses on applications
- Inconsistency in the granting approval contrary to law by the Municipal Corporations without the requisite precursors such as environmental clearance i.e Environmental Permits and/Licences
- Overlapping of jurisdiction between agencies

In this regard, developers/investors are encouraged to use the services of the DAC and all pre-consultation and facilitation mechanisms available ahead of the submission of formal applications, thereby allowing the designs to benefit from guidance with respect to requirements and standards.



Public Portal II

The Government has secured a loan from the World Bank to finance a project entitled, “Foundations for Competitiveness and Growth (FCG)”. The overall objective of the project

is to strengthen the business environment in Jamaica for private sector investment, by

- Promoting broad-based private sector-led growth,
- Improving the investment climate,
- Modernizing infrastructure and logistics
- Enhancing entrepreneurship and competitive industries.

One of the initiatives under the project is achieving improvements in the Development Application & Review Process (DARP) by:

1. Expanding the shared use of the AMANDA (Applications Management and Data Automation) software platform hosted at NEPA within the Ministry of Local Government & Community Development Municipal Corporations and Referral Agencies and
2. Implementing the enhanced AMANDA Public Portal (Public Portal II).

The pilot phase, which involves NEPA and the select Municipal Corporations is scheduled for launch in the first quarter of the fiscal year 2018/19

This system will allow for the online submission of development applications. It should be noted that the current AMANDA Public Portal does allow for the client to monitor the status of their application through the use of the universal registration number. This capability will be further enhanced with the implementation of Public Portal II.



Funding for MSMEs

I turn now to the Micro Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Sector.

During the last fiscal year, we made a commitment that the Development Bank of Jamaica would target support of over J\$26 billion in investments and over seven billion dollars (J\$7) billion in loan approvals. We said it would provide support to 200 new businesses and impact 810 MSMEs through capacity development initiatives. 4,500 new jobs were to be targeted from these initiatives.

I am happy to state that as at March 31, this year, the DBJ supported J\$6.6 billion in loan approvals, with five thousand potential new jobs to be created from the financing provided to MSMEs. The DBJ exceeded the J\$26 billion investment target by \$6.9 billion at the end of March 2018.

Of the \$32.9 billion investment, DBJ financing accounted for \$11.4 billion; Capacity Development and Venture Capital \$4.1 billion; and PPP and Privatization accounted for \$17.4 billion.

In addition, the Bank provided support to 252 new businesses and impacted 913 MSMEs through capacity development initiatives.

During the 2018/19 financial year, the DBJ will target support of over J\$27 billion in investments and over eight billion dollars (J\$8) billion in loan approvals. It will provide support to 220 new businesses and impact 940 MSMEs through capacity development initiatives. 5,500 new jobs are being targeted from these initiatives. **We are Creating Jobs, Empowering Jamaicans.**



SMTE Loan Programme

There is also positive news from the National Export-Import Bank of Jamaica which has surpassed the J\$6.31 billion it had set for disbursements in the 2017-18 financial year, with actual disbursements as at March 31, 2018 standing at \$6.53billion

In collaboration with the Tourism Enhancement Fund, the EX-IM Bank's Small and Medium Tourism Enterprise Loan Programme has an overall J\$1 billion earmarked for disbursement (in tranches). Of the \$650 million received so far, there has been an almost similar amount of completed loan applications (totaling J\$649.50 million), with J\$347 million already disbursed. The subsectors that have benefitted thus far include:

- Small accommodations
- Linkages (suppliers of goods and services)
- Shopping
- Attractions
- Gastronomy
- Spa and wellness

Overall, the total value of SMTE loans now stands at \$736 million incorporating what has already been disbursed, what has not yet been disbursed, and applications in-house.

Cuban Line of Credit Expansion

EX-IM Bank is expanding the programme based on the strategic arrangement that Jamaica has with Cuba and has availed lines of credit facilities in the amount of Ten Million Canadian Dollars (CDN\$10,000,000) to finance the export of Jamaican manufactured goods to Cuba. Twenty (20) companies, chiefly in manufacturing, that participated in the "Cuba Market Development Consultation" hosted by EX-IM Bank and JAMPRO recently, are well on their way to finalizing negotiations for exports/increased exports to Cuba. This should positively impact the Balance of Payments.

Supplier Ecosystem Enhancement & Development (SEED)

As part of a major thrust to spur growth in the economy, the Jamaica Special Economic Zone Authority (JSEZA) will be utilizing a holistic approach whereby manufacturers and service providers within Special Economic Zones (SEZs) will be encouraged to build supply arrangements with domestic suppliers.

We want to ensure that MSMEs play an integral role in reducing the distance in terms of the number of production stages in a global value chain between the production of a given good and the final consumer, i.e. more internal production.

This is how the Authority facilitates the spread of backward linkages, thereby extending SEZ benefits to the local economy. It is to this end that a local enterprise business linkage programme entitled Supplier Ecosystem Enhancement & Development (SEED) has been designed by the Authority in keeping with the SEZ legislation.

The SEED Programme will see SMEs playing a greater role with SEZs acting as an incubator for the country's next set of multi-national corporations. Both the Local Enterprise Business Linkage Programme and the SEED Programme have already been endorsed by the Jamaica Manufacturers Association and the Authority will continue to work with key stakeholders to ensure a sustainable programme.

Infrascope Advancement

It is noteworthy that Jamaica's Public Private Partnership Programme ranked 4th in Latin America and the Caribbean with a 71 percent rating, following joint leaders Chile and Colombia at 74 percent, and 3rd ranked Brazil at 72 percent. Peru rounds out the top with a rating of 69 percent.

This was announced by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) when they revealed the results of the 2017 Infrascope, a survey that ranks 19 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, based on their capacity to mobilize private investment in infrastructure through PPP's. We are on the right track, and we will continue to pursue PPPs in a fiscally prudent manner, while harnessing the capital and innovation of the private sector.

Jamaica Logistics Hub Initiative



We have advanced the Jamaica Logistics Hub Initiative. Cabinet on May 7, 2018 approved:

- 1) The tabling of the Jamaica Logistics Hub Initiative (JLHI): Market Analysis and Master Plan in Parliament for adoption;
- 2) The implementation strategy for the JLHI: Market Analysis and Master Plan;

- 3) The request for funding from the Foundations for Competitiveness and Growth Project (FCGP) for a Consultancy firm/Consortia to act as the Transformation Management Office (TMO) to provide guidance and expertise to the Implementation Teams; and
- 4) The Jamaica Special Economic Zone Authority (JSEZA) as the implementing agency for the JLHI: Market Analysis and Master Plan.

The Master Plan specifically details the actions Jamaica will need to take on several fronts simultaneously, in order to realize the JLHI vision. Namely, a seven-part strategy consisting of those critical elements, referred to as strategic enablers, that significantly affect Jamaica's ability to achieve the buildout of SEZ.

This entails approximately 3,900 hectares of development across the island, with a total investment cost of over US\$28 billion, which represents the creation of about 87,000 direct jobs. The Master Plan will be tabled in the House shortly for information and discussion



Norman Manley International Airport

We are moving ahead with the privatization of the Norman Manley International Airport. Eight bidders pre-qualified and provided with the Request for Proposal and Draft Concession Agreement. Currently, due diligence activities are being undertaken.

As part of the cabinet submission process, the Ministry of Transport and Mining has circulated the draft cabinet submission along with the revised Concession Agreement for final review and approval by the Government. We expect a Cabinet Decision during the first quarter of the 2018/19 Financial year. We also expect to finalize the Concession Agreement with investors and receive bids in the first Quarter of this financial year.

Housing Starts and Cement Sales

There is a saying that if you do not see cranes in a city, then growth is not taking place. At last count, we had eight such cranes operating in the Corporate Area alone. There is a hive of activity that is occurring in the construction sector evidenced by the number of housing starts, as well as cement production.

It is noteworthy that the increase in the supply of cement, over the period 2015, 2016 and 2017 has averaged over 7.5 percent. According to figures provided by the PIOJ, the number of housing starts by the National Housing Trust for 2017 was 3,277, compared with 3,024 in 2016 and 1,270 in 2015. These data suggest a vibrancy in economic activity. **We are creating jobs, and empowering Jamaicans.**

Grow Castor Bean Project



We are putting in the necessary measures to ensure that where opportunities exist, investment occurs. One group that is doing so, is the Jamaica Baptist Union which has started the National Grow Castor Bean Project. The black castor bean is a highly prized compound in a range of hair products and cosmetics. The industry is set to grow to over US\$2 billion in another seven years.

The Project is a farming, agro-processing and new product development initiative geared at achieving sustainable community development by capitalizing on opportunities which exist in the Castor Oil and Derivatives Industry.

Under the project, the group aims to:

- Produce 2.5 million pounds of castor beans annually in Phase 1.
- Process Jamaican Black and Commercial Grades Castor Oil in Phase 2
- Train & develop project farmers in business and agronomy skills.
- Facilitate registration of farms as formalized MSMEs
- Make available industry research and development information

To date, the Project has mobilized 170 farmers across 13 parishes to grow castor beans, utilizing 1000 acres of marginal lands. The Project now has its sights set on raising donor support to build its Net Zero Energy Processing Facility.

I had the opportunity to address this group last year and I must tell you that I am heartened and optimistic about the future of our beloved country. Initiatives like these are **‘Creating Jobs – Empowering Jamaicans’**.

Legislative/Policy Framework for Investment

One of the key components of our growth agenda is the implementation of the necessary legislative enabling framework to support the kind of investment we hope to attract through the Jamaica International Financial Services Authority (JIFSA).

The International Corporate and Trust Providers Act 2017

The International Corporate and Trust Providers Act 2017 was passed in July last year. The Act establishes a regulatory regime for the licensing and conduct of international corporate and trust services providers, who will perform duties on behalf of international entities and trusts setting up in Jamaica. We are working to finalize the relevant regulations and determine a competitive tax regime to attract potential investors.

The International Business Companies (IBC) Bill

The International Business Companies (IBC) Bill was tabled in Parliament on February 13, 2018. It is expected that this Act will be passed in Parliament before the end of the first quarter of FY 2018/2019. With the passage of the IBC Act, Jamaica is expected to attract significant international business, thereby increasing foreign exchange earnings and creating numerous high-value employment opportunities for local professionals

The Partnership (General) Act 2017 and the Partnership (Limited) Act 2017

Two other pieces of priority legislation were passed in July 2017 to facilitate international business development. They are the Partnership (General) Act 2017 and the Partnership (Limited) Act 2017. These Acts will enable a wide range of sophisticated international business transactions.

International Migration and Development Policy

The International Migration and Development Policy was tabled in Parliament on June 6, 2017. An implementation plan was developed, and work has commenced under several thematic areas.

National Investment Policy

Global Partners Consulting was contracted to assist in developing the National Investment Policy. Initial reports have been prepared and approved. Consultations took place in 2017, and the Green Paper should be ready by the end of the first quarter of the 2018-19 fiscal year.

We are drafting the necessary enabling legislation to facilitate investment with a view **to Creating jobs and Empowering Jamaicans**

Downtown Kingston Re-Development Project

In my Sectoral Presentation last year, I spoke to a project that has far reaching implications for our economic growth and social development agenda. The Downtown Kingston Redevelopment Project (DKRP) is a proposed pilot project utilizing a proven and innovative Public Private Community Partnership (PPCP) model to leverage the wealth creating resources of the area and people, rather than focusing on alleviating deficits. The aim is the creation of a positive ecosystem with mutually beneficial gains for all stakeholders.

The meaningful redevelopment of downtown Kingston and satellite communities, requires an inclusive process, which links diverse stakeholders into mutually beneficial relationships, that allows them to benefit from an improved environment for economic growth.

The PPCP model seeks to achieve this through the creation of interdependent stakeholder groups/clusters, comprised of members who are best suited to address specific challenges facing the community.

The spaces of opportunities would include the inner harbour, commercial district, night life, Coronation Market area, haberdashery district, the light manufacturing and industrial areas, and the port. They would also include the underdeveloped network of small business services that form the critical undercarriage of sustainable and successful cities.

The DKRP will cluster stakeholders according to the nature of their envisioned potential roles: It will have the several clusters:-

- The Economic Empowerment Cluster includes government stakeholders with the mandate to empower economic and community life in general.
- The Civic Mediation Cluster includes stakeholders charged with building community skills for negotiating civic governance and abating civic challenges.
- The Capacity Building Cluster is concerned with improving community literacy and employment skills, including the emotional and disciplinary aspects.
- The Downtown Community Groups Cluster will include local stakeholders invested in cultivating and facilitating localized ownership of the responsibilities for the success and sustenance of the DKRP.
- The Calibration and Coordination Cluster will include government stakeholders with the mandate for security and protection of assets.

In each case a lead enterprise or organization will be identified to undertake an interlocking role within and across clusters. The DKRP will be guided by the notion that all stakeholders are motivated by the need to reduce the high cost of non-cooperation in order to reap the benefits of an expanded and more welcoming business environment and a significantly improved environment for social and cultural living.

The DKRP principles and paradigm are easily adaptable to economic and social re-development efforts in the central business districts and their environs in St. James, St. Mary, St. Thomas and Portland, among others.

Cabinet is to consider the final report in the next few days, and will decide on the way forward. I am particularly pleased with this project because of a number of factors:-

1. The project is funded by the Private Sector
2. The backward and forward linkages it creates and
3. The positive impact it will have on the social dimension especially in the inner-cities which should assist in reducing crime.

We are **Creating Jobs – Empowering Jamaicans**

LAND



Land remains an integral factor in the pursuit of economic growth and social development as key sectors rely heavily on land and its utilization. The Cabinet had approved the merger of LAMP into NLA with a clear and decisive objective of improving land titling in the country.

I want to state for the record that the NLA/LAMP merger followed extensive consultations with all stakeholders including the opposition, and the legal fraternity.



We have citizens who have to wait in some cases more than 5 years to be able to get their land titles.

This is inconsistent with the Government's objective to empower our people in order to grow the economy in various industries many of which are dependent on the effective use of land, for example the Agriculture and Construction Sectors.

We cannot successfully fix this problem by using the same approach that has been tried for the past 40 years. We have to adopt new approaches to make the process easier by reducing the number of steps and at the same time, making it more affordable to obtain a land title.

We plan to achieve this by adopting a simple, transparent and participatory community-based approach to adjudication in order to establish land ownership. This type of approach has been used successfully in various countries worldwide to carry out rapid land titling and as a way to reduce the cost and time for formalizing land ownership.

- The Land titling Business processes will be streamlined and re-engineered to be more efficient with improved accountability, and

- Recommendations will be made for required amendments to the Regulations of the Special Provisions Act that will strengthen and enhance the operations of adjudication committees.

We currently have 16 LAMP Adjudication Committees across the parishes and they will come under the new framework thereby making them more effective in performing their duties to resolve land ownership and facilitating the issuing of more land titles.

This will be supported with the use of modern digital land mapping technology to make the process as efficient as possible.

The Ministry is currently considering a proposal on a Public Private Partnership basis to secure financing to carry out the mapping of lands which will update the digital cadastral index. This programme will be geared towards the formalization of various settlements islandwide, community by community, and will include Government Land Settlements as well as many other settlements all over the country.

This community-based approach represents a fundamental shift to create greater efficiencies.

The Most Honourable Prime Minister in his recent budget presentation, spoke to the new systematic titling programme which is expected to produce 20,000 titles over 3 years. The process involved extensive consultation period with persons in the private and public sectors, which culminated in a report being prepared in September 2017, to guide the process.

There are approximately 300,000 parcels of unregistered land in Jamaica, which represents 40% of the total number of parcels of land. The Government has stated that one of its goals is to increase the scope and pace of land titling efforts and promote measures to strengthen the use of land tenure rights as collateral.

Currently, there is a voluntary system of registration, which is based on an application by the landowner. The landowner elects the time he makes the application.

There will be a paradigm shift under the new regime. We will operate not only a voluntary system, but will also add a systematic land titling process. In the systematic process, we will declare an adjudication area where we will map and adjudicate ownership of all parcels within the specified area. We will be in the community, and will work along with the community and the Adjudication Committees in the parish. The pilot for systematic Land titling will commence in St. Elizabeth and Portland respectively, as these two parishes have the lowest percentage of properties with titles.

Funding for the 20,000 titles would be provided by the National Housing Trust. This will allow persons to receive a loan in order to process their title and provisions will be made for servicing the loan accordingly.

During this fiscal year, we will be preparing the groundwork. Policy and legislative changes are to be made to facilitate the systematic process, including strengthening the adjudication process; reducing the registration fees under the Registration of Titles Cadastral Mapping and Tenure Clarification (Special Provisions) Act (SPA) for parcels of land valued below \$2 million; and we will restructure the National Land Agency to take on these additional duties.

As part of the new process, we want to encourage and invite all private Attorneys-at-Law to participate in the programme. NLA will facilitate training to sensitize them on the procedures and benefits of the SPA. They therefore will be partners with the NLA to achieve the goals of increasing the number of registered lands.

Additionally, we will be conducting a broad public education campaign to highlight the benefits of having a Land Title, and we want to encourage persons to use the resources available to them, under the Special Provisions Act, to obtain their titles.

We have the political will to carry out this transformation which is of critical importance to our economic goals. From the study completed in September 2017, it is clear that there must be meaningful interventions in the existing programme "...to realise a general increase in titles annually..." That is what we are aiming to do.

The creation of a Geographic Information Systems Service Corporation was also announced. We see this as a strategic way to drive the fast tracking of large scale programmes such as this one which requires significant human resources in order to be accomplished over a short time, while at the same time, creating employment for our young people. The Service Corporations will be provided with training and will then be engaged to participate in field and office activities in the programme. We are **Creating Jobs, Empowering Jamaicans**.

Proposed Implementation of Electronic Titling

Jamaica implemented an automated registration system several years ago, however the processing of transactions by the Office of Titles is still largely paper based.

This has implications for the efficiency of the entire process of transferring property, fraudulent title transactions and maintenance of the paper records.

A study is currently being undertaken with the assistance of the World Bank, to allow the National Land Agency to implement an electronic titling system and will involve a study tour of Land Information New Zealand by a team from JAMPRO, NLA and the World Bank. Workshops will be held in Jamaica to advance the reform of the titles system and consultations held with various stakeholders.

New Zealand currently ranks as No. 1 for registering property in the Doing Business Report by the World Bank and uses the Torrens titling system which is also used in Jamaica.

We are moving away from a manual paper-based system towards an electronic-based system, which will allow for a more efficient and cost-effective process over time. We therefore will be tackling both issues head on, that is, issuing of 20,000 titles and the restructuring of the titling platform.

The NLA is working in conjunction with JAMPRO, PIOJ and the World Bank to facilitate the implementation of electronic titling in Jamaica. Consultants are currently being employed to assist with designing the system and this will include legislative changes to the Registration of Titles Act, to allow for the records to be kept in an electronic format and to allow submissions of documents electronically.

It is projected that within the next 3 years, all original title documents will be converted to electronic format.

In the interim, the NLA has designed online forms for land titling matters to make it easier to submit documents. To date, 18 forms have been completed and are in use and seven (7) more will be completed and launched by March 31, 2019.

Additionally, as a part of our technological upgrading and customer-centric focus, the Surveys and Mapping Division has recently acquired new software and equipment to test a system to allow for submission of survey plans electronically. Stakeholders will have a chance via workshops and consultations to comment on the systems being introduced.

This Government is fully committed to improving land administration and land titling. Consequently, every effort is being made to strengthen the capacity of the National Land Agency to achieve its mandate.

In order to maximize land usage consistent with achieving faster economic growth, I am in the process of gathering information which can guide us in this matter which synchronizes with what the Member from North Western Manchester is doing. The information includes:

- An audit of all lands in the possession of the NLA and the level of usage of the lands
- The status of large parcels of lands that have been leased and their utilization
- The issue of recovering of GOJ lands leased and not utilized. If you don't use it, you will lose it, and so, we are looking at how lands not utilized can be recovered without the GOJ going to court
- The need to have clear and measureable performance clauses included when GOJ lands are divested, and facilitating the reverting of lands to GOJ for non-performance
- The development of a methodology to deal with lands acquired from the GOJ for speculative purposes and how this can be determined

To achieve this, I have mandated NLA to work with the other relevant agencies to obtain the necessary information .

I am not sure what will be achieved as the Opposition has had the last twenty two of twenty seven years to address the matter of land titling yet still we find ourselves way behind.

The issue of land titling is too important to this government's growth agenda to be politicized. I have therefore given instructions as part of the Terms of Reference of the merger of LAMP and NLA and the Opposition to name a representative to be part of the wide consultations which will be held with all stakeholder groups in order to come up with a holistic policy which will be accepted and implemented with the full buy in by all.

This approach is inclusive, rather than going the route of Committees and Commissions which we all know has not taken us very far over the years on our attempts to grow Jamaica.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Poor air quality and targeted response strategy



I turn now to the Environment and begin with the ongoing air quality issues in sections of the Kingston Metropolitan area, particularly in the Six Miles to Three Miles area. The issue is very current, given the recent burning of tyres at Riverton in the area.

A study conducted by NEPA returned empirical evidence that the poor air quality along the corridor is due to a combination of motor vehicle emissions, emissions from industrial facilities, illegal open burning, and occasional fires from the Riverton Disposal Site. The recently completed 2017 Annual Air Quality Report produced by NEPA shows that this area is of high risk in terms of air quality.

In response to the continued occurrences which threaten the health of the public, particularly those that reside in communities located within the vicinity of the Riverton City disposal site, a Source Emission Reduction Strategy and Plan of Action was prepared in consultation with key government agencies and other stakeholders and is being implemented.

The Plan targets the closure of illegal sites and removal of solid waste including tyres, community sensitization and awareness building, strategies to address ‘minor’ sources of air pollution, deployment of additional air quality monitors and the development of a national programme for the environmentally sound management of used tyres.

It is estimated that approximately three hundred (300) used tyres per day are sent to the Riverton City disposal area. The existence of these tyres pose a significant fire hazard, and by extension a threat to human health and property.

Draft Emissions Policy Framework

A draft Emissions Policy Framework for Jamaica was developed by the Ministry during the 2017-2018 FY. The Policy Framework was developed with oversight from an Inter-Ministerial Committee comprising the Ministers of Transport and Mining; Science Energy and Technology; Tourism; and Health, and benefitted from targeted consultations with key stakeholders across the public and private sector.

This Policy Framework provides the policy directives for, inter alia, the regulation of emissions from major sectors, including electricity, transportation and industry. It is anticipated that the draft Policy Framework will be approved by the Cabinet as a Green Paper early in the 2018/19 FY which will allow the necessary public consultations on this document.

The NEPA, as coordinator and primary implementers of the Jamaica Air Quality Management Programme, recognizes that despite some achievements with respect to the implementation of the programme, a number of areas still need to be addressed.

These include:

- a. Expansion of the monitoring network to include other areas outside the KMA, Montego Bay, May Pen, Spanish Town and Mandeville
- b. Expansion of the number of pollutants being monitored to include gaseous pollutants (currently only particulate matter is monitored)
- c. Development of the capacity to conduct elemental speciation
- d. Publication of an Air Quality Index for Jamaica which provides daily information to the public on the air quality in their respective areas and also precautionary measures for personal protection

The Government and the Natural Resources Conservation Authority, are providing additional funding support to strengthen the National Air Quality Management Programme. Approximately nine million dollars (J\$9,000,000) will be spent this year in expanding the monitoring regime and to build technical capacity to further bolster and enhance air quality procedures protocols and standards.

Support for minimization of plastic waste



The country is facing a national crisis with the improper management of wastes. Despite the many initiatives undertaken by both the private and public sectors, individually and jointly, the issue of the improper disposal of plastics, including PET bottles, plastic bags and Styrofoam, remains a major challenge for the country.

We use and dispose of almost one billion PET bottles annually, equivalent to 350 bottles per Jamaican each year.

Currently, only 10 per cent of these bottles are captured for recycling and export. Most of the 90 per cent remainder is disposed of along with other household waste.

Some of this is also improperly disposed of, causing litter, which is not only unsightly, but blocks drains causing flooding during rain fall, and creating breeding sites for mosquitoes.

As most of this litter ultimately ends up in the sea, it also degenerates our coastline and causes harm to our marine ecosystems, upon which our economy depends heavily.

Presently, the Government is providing financial support to Recycling Partners of Jamaica Limited (RPJL), a private sector led initiative geared towards the island-wide collection and export of PET bottles, under Housing Opportunities for Prosperity and Employment (HOPE). Since November 2016, RPJL has collected over 1.3M pounds of plastic wastes for export.

The entity has instituted PET bottle collection programmes in some 52 schools across the island and operates two collection depots, one in Montego Bay and the other in Kingston.

The fundamental issue for the country however, is the lack of an integrated approach to waste management and more specifically plastic waste as a major source of marine litter. The Agency developed and launched a Plastics Minimization Project in collaboration with UN Environment and the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation with the support of the government of Japan in the amount of US\$ 700,000. This project will be executed during this financial year.

The overall objective of the project is to enhance the capacity of the country to carry out integrated waste management activities and strengthen the policy and legislative framework to reduce and manage plastic marine litter from land-based activities in an integrated and environmentally sound manner. Specific deliverables of the project will include:

- a. National Strategy and Action Plan for integrated waste
- b. Resource Impact Assessments (RIAs) to assess the impact of waste generated from plastic packaging materials on the marine environment conducted including hotspot assessment.
- c. Revised National Plan of Action on Land Based Sources of Pollution



In recent months the Government has conducted significant consultations with a broad array of stakeholders to arrive at consensus or at minimum bring stakeholders into the confidence of the Government with the actions which must be taken.

In a recent meeting with the Prime Minister, Myself and the Manufacturers of single use plastic the issue was discussed at length the issue was laid squarely on the table. A frank discussion was had, and all options available to the Government were discussed.

The Social Conscience of our Manufactures was appealed to by the MHPM along with direct “advice” to take advantage of Technology upgrades and innovation within their manufacturing process to reduce their national footprint.

Those present were also asked to be responsible with their use of the advertising dollar to ensure that they did their part in the necessary Public Education Effort.

This is not to give the impression to the country that the Administration is in a wait and see mode, but rather to assure the country that adequate consultations have taken place and also to assure the public that great care is being taken to minimize and avert any economic fallout from changes in regulations which apply to the Plastics Industry.

Change is coming. That change however acknowledges that there is not a one size fits all policy which will achieved our desired objectives. The term “single use plastic” refers to a number of items which must be approached with tailor made solutions despite their cumulative contribution to the totality of the problem.

Note is taken of CAPRI’s research finding that a deposit refund scheme has the potential to be successful in reducing the prevalence of PET bottles in Jamaica’s waste stream and in the environment, as it provides a financial incentive for consumers to return PET bottles, allowing for more centralized management and processing of PET for export for recycling.

The Most Hon. Prime Minister in his budget address already indicated that it is the intention of the administration to work with Industry players through the Jamaica Recycling Partners to implement a deposit scheme similar to the one we would all have grown up being accustomed to with glass bottles.

The proposal was initially made by the Manufacturers and was accepted at the National Partnership Meetings. Details of the program including the deposit amount will be made public at the appropriate time.

“Scandal Bags”



Action on “Scandal Bags” has been carefully considered. It is not a simple problem because despite the lack of Bio-Degradability of the bags and the fact that they often block drains and contribute to flooding and general environmental degradation they are often used for containerization of waste after collection of products purchased from the distributive trade. However, make no mistake, they do pose a major problem to our country.

These single use plastic bags are not recyclable. They have no value beyond their use, however extend a cost each time used on the broader society. The action we intend to take in short order is the full ban of the use of single-use plastic bags in the retail trade.

In essence Jamaicans will need to use reusable bags when they go to the supermarket or wholesale. Specific regulations will be put in place for “Garbage Bags” which will include sizes which will be allowed and the mandatory use of the enzymes which make plastics Oxo-Degradable.

Improved watershed management and biodiversity conservation

The Integrated Management of the Yallahs and Hope River Watershed Management Areas project is being implemented in accordance with Government's commitment to improve the management of the country's watersheds management units. This is a five-year project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Government of Jamaica (GOJ). The total budget for the project is US\$12,781,798, of which US\$3,909,441 comprises funding from the GEF and US\$8,872,357 is co-financing from the GOJ.

The overall objective of the Project is to improve the conservation and management of biodiversity and the provision of ecosystem services in the Yallahs River and Hope River Water Management Units. This is intended to contribute to the reduction of the pressures and threats to the natural resources in the targeted WMUs, by increasing the practice of Sustainable Land Management (SLM), and, thereby, resulting in the improved management of biological diversity and enhanced flow of ecosystem services that sustain local livelihoods.



Under a component of the Project, a Payment for Environmental Services System (PES) will be designed and implemented, which is expected to provide financial resources to continue financing conservation activities within critical watersheds. An international firm with experience in the implementation of PES systems has been contracted by NEPA, with support and supervision jointly by the WRA, NWC and NEPA

A significant impact to the watershed is the incidence of frequent forest fires because of extended drought conditions. The Agency with support from the Project, launched an Anti-Burning campaign geared towards sensitizing the population in relation to the possible consequences of open burning and the penalties associated with the Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act (Environmental Protection Measures) Order signed by the Honorable Prime Minister in 2016.

Protected Areas Management

The NRCA/NEPA has completed work to support the designation of the Black River Landscape, St. Elizabeth as well as Pedro Cays and surrounding waters as protected areas. The designation of these two proposed protected areas under the Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act will contribute to national, regional and international commitments to increase the number and coverage of marine, terrestrial and inland water protected areas.

In October last year the NEPA initiated discussions with the Urban Development Corporation (UDC) regarding the management and further protection of the Goat Islands, as an integral component of the Portland Bight Protected Area.

This partnership will be formalized in a co-management agreement for the Great Goat Island with the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA)/National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA). The objective is to provide a refuge for Jamaica's flora and fauna including the critically endangered Jamaican Iguana as well as the vulnerable Jamaican Coney and Jamaican Boa.

A management plan will be prepared specifying the vision, goals, strategies, actions and zonation of the area. A phased approach will be undertaken which includes the removal and control of threats, restoration of the habitat and re-introduction or introduction of endemic, endangered and threatened species.

The NRCA/NEPA and the UDC are committed to providing financial and technical support towards this effort and it is anticipated that this will be supplemented by resources from the international environmental community.

Green Business Jamaica and the Green Economy

The Pilot Phase of The Green Business Jamaica Certification Programme was officially launched in May 2017 to support the achievement of national sustainable consumption and production goals. The GBJ is designed to help business operators incorporate best practices in the area of environmental stewardship, in an effort to reduce operational costs and sustain natural resources.

The programme is voluntary and gives businesses the opportunity to promote and implement environmentally friendly processes in the core elements of their operations, while practicing high standards in pollution prevention and resource conservation in line with global standards. Businesses that receive GBJ certification will be able to display the approved Ecolabel sign or logo on their establishments, stationery or packaging to signify that they are doing their part to protect the environment and reduce their carbon footprint.

The Green Economy is an economic model that is associated with green growth (sectors and industries that conserve and manage natural resources as drivers or fuel for growth), low-carbon development (reduction in fossil fuel use as foundation for development), and the circular economy (closed loop systems, reliant on renewable energy and use of waste as a resource for another process).



Jamaica has welcomed aspects of a green economy through initiatives related to climate change and climate resilient development, and renewable energy. Although GBJ is not established through regulatory means and is voluntary; it is poised to be a practical and pivotal programme through which green economy objectives can be achieved throughout businesses and organizations.

A total of twenty one facilities located in Kingston and St. Andrew participated in the initial introductory sessions and have shown keen interests in the programme. UN Environment will be providing funding support to this programme in the amount of US\$200,000.

Climate Change



I turn now to climate change and begin by saying that the impacts and devastation that we witnessed during the 2017 hurricane season must serve as a key reminder that climate change is not an event to come or a situation for coming generations. The climate has already changed, it will continue to change and we must prepare and brace ourselves for any possible eventualities.

In 2017-2018 Financial year the GOJ took concrete steps to strengthen our enabling framework at both the national and international levels that will ensure sustainability in our resilience building efforts and that Climate change is integrated in our policies, regulations, plans, programmes.

Third National Communication to the UNFCCC

Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change are required to report on their activities to implement the Convention in the form of National Communications. Jamaica in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has completed its Third National Communication. I hope to bring it before the Cabinet of Jamaica soon to seek approval for its submission to the Executive Secretariat on the UNFCCC.

This document contains the latest information on the emissions of greenhouse gases for the country from 2006 to 2012. Also included are mitigation options with the potential to reduce our carbon emissions from the energy sector up to the year 2050. This is excellent resource data for town planners, construction engineers, architects, researchers, students, energy planners, project developers and many others.

Climate Change Focal Point Network (CCFPN)

Work continues towards strengthening the capacity of the Climate Change Focal Point Network which is comprised of representatives of over 27 ministries and agencies who are strategically placed to promote climate mainstreaming in their respective organizations. These representatives identify and mobilize resources, to increase the technical support offered through the Climate Change Division of the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation.

Focal point members have successfully participated in regional and international meetings and workshops, and have benefitted from training in formulating and implementing adaptation plans.

Mitigating to Reduce Harmful Emissions

There is the recognizable need to reduce the country's Green House Gas (GHG) emissions profile. As a result the Climate Change Division has embarked on facilitating initiatives in the Energy, Water and Transport Sectors.

With our colleagues and stakeholders in the Energy Sector, we continue to encourage and discuss low emission strategies.

In the Water Sector, we have also engaged our partners the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) through its Japan-Caribbean Climate Change Program (J-CCCP) to create National Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) for the sector. The Water Sector NAMA is scheduled for completion in August 2018.

We have also partnered with the Ministry of Transport and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to prepare a vulnerability assessment document which examines the vulnerability of the transport sector's assets to weather, climate variability and climate change.

The assessment aims to offer guidance on how to climate-proof future and current investments in light of a changing and more variable climate.

In addition, we are currently working on completing a reduction in fuel use study also with USAID which is aimed at finding alternatives for the transport sector in an effort to reduce emissions.

Financing Climate Action



It is clear that the availability of adequate financing options towards progressively increasing mitigation and adaptation efforts is also a critical component towards achieving the articulated targets, particularly those of vulnerable small island developing states.

We continue to receive support through our regional, multilateral and bilateral partners to support adaptation and mitigation at the local level.

From the Green Climate Fund, which is the main financing mechanism to the UN-FCCC and the Paris Agreement, Jamaica has received two grants with a total value of J\$111,573,000.00 (US\$882,000) from the Readiness and Preparatory Support programme,

Jamaica is building capacity for direct access to financing from the Green Climate Fund. Three national entities have been nominated for GCF accreditation, the Development Bank of Jamaica, the Jamaica Social Investment Fund and the Planning Institute of Jamaica.

Funding support of US\$33,000 has been obtained to support the Jamaica Social Investment Fund, while advisory/technical support has been provided to the DBJ to complete their application.

Under the School Gardens Pilot Project which is a community based project, we have:-

- Installed water harvesting, storage and associated drip irrigation systems at 70 institutions of learning island wide namely 57 Schools, 2 Correctional facilities, one (1) special needs facility and eleven-4H Training Centres.
- Contributed to an increase in access and storage of rain water for irrigation of some 66,000 gallons.
- Helped to set up and re-establish fifty seven (57) school gardens that will provide produce for the School feeding programme as well as serve as practical teaching aids for students.
- Rehabilitated two communal concrete storage tanks in Clarendon and trained more than 100,000 persons in various aspects of climate resilient technologies.
- Under the Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience, the Adaptation Programme and Financing Mechanism disbursed 16 projects for the business community and 79 pilot projects at the community level.
- From the KFW Development Bank (Germany), and in collaboration with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, support totaling US\$4.6 million (US\$0.6 million per project) was received for implementing four projects
 - o Climate Change Adaptation in the Portland Bight Protected Area, Jamaica
 - o Fisheries Ecosystem Adaptation Strategies and Technology to Improve Climate Change Resilience in Negril Marine protected Areas in Jamaica
 - o Rehabilitation of Montego Bay Waterfront Breakwater Structures
 - o Developing Climate Change Adaptation Strategies for Portland

Adaptation strategies for the coastal zone in response to climate change

Approximately 56% of the island's economic assets and 70% of the population are located along coastal areas. Additionally the increase in urbanization in the coastal areas including the development of new hotels, makes this area further vulnerable to damages, with increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme events.

The GOJ/NEPA with support from the World Bank completed the preparation of National Guidelines on Coastal Zone Management and Beach Restoration. During this financial year the World Bank will be supporting the Assessment and Economic Valuation of Coastal Protection Services Provided by Mangroves in Jamaica. This is part of a national adaptation and response strategy to support ongoing activities aimed at building the resilience of the country's coastal ecosystems.

The Jamaica Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Project (DVRP), another World Bank Funded Project, will be enhancing the country's resilience to disaster and climate risk. A specific component of the DVRP will result in improved risk identification and a reduction in vulnerability in eight coastal communities (Port Maria, Alligator Pond, Black River, Savanna-la-Mar, Morant Bay, Ocho Rios, Manchioneal and Portland Cottage.

Another regional project now coming on stream is the “**Impact Assessment of Climate Change on Sandy Shorelines of the Caribbean**”, being funded by Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and implemented by Association of Caribbean States. Jamaica has been allocated US\$1 million to improve resilience of its shoreline to climate change and sea level rise. A shoreline monitoring tower will also be established at Helshire.

To support the Agriculture sector, we have secured 222,240 Euros from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation ACP-EU for a 22-month project to accelerate the uptake of Climate-smart Agriculture among our farmers in Jamaica. This project is expected to kick off in May, and will be implemented through a collaborative effort between Rural Agricultural Development Agency and the Climate Change Division.

With all this in mind, Jamaicans must always be aware of the dangers that a change in climate pose, and must take the necessary steps to ensure readiness at all times.

FORESTRY



I must recognize the Forestry Department which is celebrating 80 years of service to the country this year. Over the last eight decades the Agency has carried out its mandate to protect, conserve and sustainably manage Jamaica’s state-owned forest reserves, whilst supporting the establishment and maintenance of forest cover on privately owned land.

During the last financial year, the National Forest Management and Conservation Plan was approved by Cabinet and was tabled in Parliament. It is the country’s first climate resilient sector plan action and doubles as the National Action Plan for the United Nations Forum on Forests.

This multi-year action plan will provide the framework over the next 8 ½ years for the implementation of key activities some of which will be implemented with support received under a four-year 14.9 million Euro budgetary support programme from the Delegation of the European Union.

These activities commenced last month and will include the update of the legislation governing Jamaica’s forest sector, the verification of the boundaries of the area within the Cockpit Country to be protected as well other key forest reserves and the allocation of 2 million Euros to support alternative livelihood options for forest dependent communities. The latter programme once successfully executed will provide employment opportunities and increased capacity for alternate livelihood activities in rural communities. We are **Creating Jobs, Empowering Jamaicans**.

CONCLUSION

Mr Speaker, we continue to make modest but steady gains in our growth agenda. We are making greater gains in reducing unemployment and we will not stop until all major groupings record single digits.

I have a vision of a Jamaica that is strong fiscally and socially. A Jamaica where all citizens work together to build the foundation for inclusive growth. A Jamaica where economic opportunities abound for all our citizens. A Jamaica where innovative businesses have the support they need to grow and thrive. A Jamaica that attracts the kind of investment that will set us firmly on track to become the force that we are meant to be in this region.

As digital strategy expert Ray Goforth said... "There are two types of people who will tell you that you cannot make a difference in this world: those who are afraid to try and those who are afraid you will succeed."

We have a fail-proof recipe for success. We have the will, we have the drive, we have the necessary human and natural resources and most importantly, we have the necessary political leadership to achieve these objectives.

Nothing will hold us back, and together we will build the Jamaica that we all envision...
"The place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business"

