



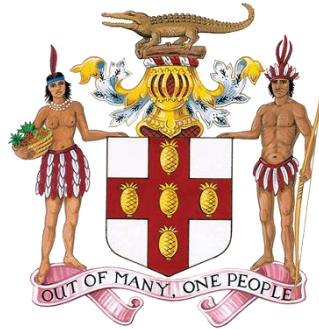
MINISTRY OF TOURISM

SECTORAL PRESENTATION 2021/2022
GORDON HOUSE, KINGSTON
April 20, 2021



BUILDING FORWARD STRONGER: TOURISM 2021 AND BEYOND

Hon. Edmund Bartlett, CD, MP
Minister of Tourism



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AS PREPARED. PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY.

Introduction and Acknowledgements

Madam Speaker, I am humbled to have been granted the privilege of serving the citizens of our beloved country for another year. I am heartened by the positive outpouring of support from members on both sides of this Honourable House, as together we work to move our people from poverty to prosperity during what has been a very difficult year for Jamaica and the entire world.

My presentation, on this my 32nd occasion addressing this Honourable House, will focus primarily on the strides we have made, using innovative techniques, to rebuild our industry, which has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Madam Speaker, it is a great privilege to be elected as a representative of the people and to be given this tremendous responsibility of building forward stronger, our nation's key industry — tourism. I, therefore, begin by thanking God for blessing me with the health and strength to provide the leadership required to fulfil this role with much success.

It is an additional privilege to serve as Leader of Government Business and Minister of Tourism. I thank the Most Honourable Prime Minister, Andrew Holness for placing his confidence in me in both capacities in the House of Representatives.

I also thank you, Madam Speaker, the Clerk and the committed staff of this Honourable House for the valuable role you play in so ably steering our nation's parliamentary affairs.

I would like to thank my colleague ministers, their staff and public bodies, especially those whose work directly impacts the tourism sector. We all work together in the best interest of Jamaica, even if we view things from different perspectives.

I also extend special gratitude to the Opposition Spokesperson on Tourism, Senator Janice Allen, for her conscientious engagement with the task assigned to her.

Permit me also to say thanks to my Permanent Secretary, Ms. Jennifer Griffith, and the dedicated team within the Ministry and its public bodies, as well as the chairpersons of the respective public bodies, their board members and their executive directors.

To my personal staff, both in Kingston and St. James, I wish to acknowledge your contribution and thank you for your assistance.

Special thanks must be reserved for my constituents in East Central St. James, for your support throughout the years. I will continue to be the best representative for you and to keep working tirelessly to ensure that East Central St. James is a model constituency.

A key project that we have worked on is our soon to be fully completed housing development – the Edmund Ridge Estates in Rhyne Park. Applications for Phase 1 opened in January, with 155 units for sale. Madam Speaker, the project falls under the Ministry of Tourism's \$1 billion Resort Squatter Settlements Upgrade

Programme in partnership with the Housing Agency of Jamaica. We will also be regulating 535 households in the Grange Pen community of St. James through land titling and infrastructure upgrades.

This hard work could not have been accomplished without the help of my staff at every level in the constituency, and I commend them for their zeal and commitment. For Ed's Tulip's, I thank you for all that you do in making lives better on a daily basis.

As we navigate these challenging times, caused by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge our tourism partners and resilient stakeholders.

I want especially to thank the President of the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association, Mr. Clifton Reader and his executive, for the cooperation and support that they have provided over the last year. I also acknowledge the work done by their immediate past president, Mr. Omar Robinson.

Last and by no means least, I thank my immediate family: My dear wife of 47 years Carmen, my son and grandchildren – they have stuck by me through thick and thin and I am glad that we continue to enjoy happiness, togetherness and good health.

PRESENTATION FLOW

Madam Speaker, we are fully cognizant of the fact that we are pressed for time and as such, I intend to go through this critical presentation with detail and precision.

I will first:

1. Highlight the realities we continue to face because of the COVID-19 pandemic
2. Outline the measures we have implemented to seamlessly tackle the pandemic
3. Detail major policy initiatives which are and will continue to reap success with or without COVID-19, and
4. Give a quick synopsis of the way forward

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Global Perspective

Madam Speaker, the first official reported case of the COVID-19 virus was in early December 2019. Since then it has had a devastating impact on economies across the globe – with travel and tourism being among the hardest hit industries. Madam Speaker, it has undoubtedly been the worst economic and social crisis of our lifetime. Governments across the world faced tough choices on how to balance livelihoods and lives, which required unprecedented action and global collaboration.

According to figures in the just released World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) 2020 Economic Impact Report (EIR):

- The Travel & Tourism sector suffered a massive loss of almost US\$4.5 trillion in 2020, coming from around US\$9 trillion, with the contribution to GDP dropping by a staggering 49.1 per cent compared to 2019; relative to a 3.7 per cent GDP decline of the global economy in 2020.
- In 2019, Madam Speaker, the Travel & Tourism sector contributed 10.4 per cent to global GDP; a share which decreased to 5.5 per cent in 2020.
- In 2020, more than 62 million jobs were lost, (many Women, Young People and SMEs) representing a drop of 18.5 per cent, leaving just 272 million employed across the industry globally, compared to 334 million in 2019.

Madam Speaker, the sector has experienced a shocking loss in international travel spending, which was down 69.4 per cent on the previous year.

- Meanwhile, domestic travel spending fell by 45 per cent, a lower decline due to some internal travel in a number of countries.

Regional Perspective

The Caribbean region was also significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, primarily because we are statistically one of the most tourism-dependent regions in the world.

- Tourist arrivals to the region in 2020 declined to 11 million. Madam Speaker, this is a decline of 65.5 per cent when compared to the record 32 million tourist arrivals in the previous year.
- Last year, hotel occupancy across Caribbean destinations averaged between 10 to 30 per cent with many hotels and tourist attractions at risk of falling into insolvency and receivership.
- Despite the obvious decline, our arrivals still proved to be better than the world average of 73.9 per cent decline, during the same period.
- However, Cruise was completely wiped out... falling to zero
- When the borders in the region began to reopen in June, the average length of stay in 2020 equalled that recorded in 2019 – seven days.
- The CTO predicts that this year the Caribbean will continue to build forward stronger, forecasting a 20 per cent rise in arrivals, with a similar increase in

visitor expenditure, when compared to 2020. However, international travel confidence may not significantly increase until this summer.

Local Perspective

Madam Speaker, in February 2020 Jamaica recorded 6.0 per cent growth in stopover arrivals and was on a trajectory to achieving double-digit growth in stopover arrivals for the year. However, the tourism sector, like many other sectors, was devastated by the global pandemic, which led to the closure of Jamaica's borders to international travel on March 21, 2020.

This resulted in the shuttering of tourism establishments, including hotels, villas, attractions, shopping malls and ground transportation. For April and May, there was virtually no activity in the major components of the tourism sector. This led to a reduction in revenue for tourism operators and also those entities that supply the tourism industry, leading to widespread job losses.

The effects of the pandemic were also felt throughout the economy as tourism's interconnectedness with other industries, including manufacturing, agriculture, entertainment, banking and utilities, has resulted in wide-scale financial fallout. Utility service providers, including the National Water Commission and the Jamaica Public Service Company, as well as a range of other players in the economy, to this day continue to feel the tremendous squeeze from tourism's contraction.

Madam Speaker, the extent of the fallout in tourism is captured in the following figures:

- For the last fiscal year, the Jamaican Government lost direct revenue from the tourism sector of J\$46.3 billion through airport charges and taxes, Guest Accommodation Room Tax (GART), General Consumption Tax, Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) collections, cruise taxes, and other government taxes.
- With the reopening of the borders on June 15, the total number of stopover arrivals up to March 2021 was approximately 464,348, as there were no cruise visitors during this period.
- With the anticipated number of arrivals of 2.8 million stopover visitors for the April 2020 to March 2021 period, the estimated retained visitor expenditure was \$199.4 billion.
- However, with almost 500,000 visitors for the same period, the expenditure was only \$44.7 billion and as such, the loss in visitor expenditure was \$154.7 billion.
- Arrivals at the end of 2020, were 1.3 million, of this 880,404 were from stopover arrivals and 449,271 from cruise. This represents a 68 per cent decrease from the 4.3 million visitors to the island over the same period in 2019.

- Jamaica also recorded US\$1.3 billion in earnings, which was a 62.6 per cent decline in comparison to 2019.

Nevertheless, Madam Speaker, we remain hopeful and can report that 2021 so far has been positive.

- We welcomed 40,055 visitors in January, 40,076 in February, over 69,040 in March and just over 70,000 to date in this month of April.... raking in roughly US\$360 million
- The general outlook for the upcoming fiscal year is quite positive as we expect to realize growth of 122 per cent on earnings and 236 per cent in visitor arrivals. Of this number, we hope to welcome 1.043 million stopover visitors, which is a 117 per cent increase over last year's stopover numbers.
- Jamaica should have up to 60 per cent coverage of the United States market by the end of May.
- We also anticipate that some 800,000 airline seats will become available for the upcoming summer, a number that is approximately 70 per cent of the level experienced in 2019.

My colleague Minister, Hon. Nigel Clarke noted in his budget presentation that foreign exchange inflows from tourism are expected to fall by 74 per cent for the 2020/21 fiscal year, which is a US\$2.5 billion decline and will set back the country by 30 years.

The numbers tell the story. Tourism is a key driver of economies across the world, including that of Jamaica, through job creation, export revenues, infrastructure development and new business.

Therefore, it is up to us to reset the tourism industry, so that we can change this trajectory and place tourism on a path to recovery to fuel growth in the wider economy.

We must view this unprecedented crisis as a transformational opportunity. As we seek to rebuild our tourism economy despite COVID-19, we must embrace measures that will ensure a tourism product that is safe, innovative, attractive to visitors, and economically viable for all of our citizens.

OUR RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

Madam Speaker, the pandemic has presented the greatest challenge to the sector that I have ever witnessed.

Madam Speaker, historically, tourism has shown a strong ability to adapt. As we seek to recover and prepare for the future, we embrace new strategies, a new orientation and new ethos that will ensure that the tourism sector becomes more resilient, sustainable, inclusive and competitive. I am confident that a strong multi-level response and partnership will help us to achieve full recovery.

Madam Speaker, our leading edge COVID-19 tourism recovery programme has allowed for the seamless and safe reopening of our borders.

Just to give a brief recap, Madam Speaker, from as far back as January 2020, when the first wave of the coronavirus was reported in China, we set up a Coordinating team and eventually announced measures to be adopted by all tourism entities to minimize the spread of the virus.

Our recovery process, led by our Recovery Taskforce, was guided by a five-point recovery strategy, which was managed by a multi-disciplinary task force:

- Robust health and security protocols that will withstand local and international scrutiny.
- Training all sectors to manage protocols and new behavioural patterns moving forward.
- Strategies around COVID-19 security infrastructure (Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), masks, infrared machines, etc.).
- Communication with the local and international markets about reopening.
- A staggered approach to reopening/managing risk in a structured way.

Specially assigned staff from the **Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCo)**, who are a part of the Stakeholder Risk Management Unit, along with members of the COVID-19 Resilient Corridor management team, have been closely monitoring the implementation of these measures to ensure strict compliance.

Our protocols, which received the global endorsement of the WTTC, complement our highly successful Resilient Corridors to the north and south of the island, designed to keep workers, communities and visitors safe by only opening an area that we have the capacity to effectively monitor and manage.

To date, there have been few known cases of transmission of COVID-19 along the Resilient Corridors, which is proof that our highly regarded health and safety protocols are working and testament to the high level of compliance by tourism stakeholders.

This is why, internationally, Jamaica is regarded as a leading example of how to create a safe and seamless travel experience for our visitors. More recently, we named a special task force to spearhead efforts to boost Jamaica's COVID-19 testing capacity. This task force has been working along with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and tourism stakeholders, both within the public and private sectors, to boost Jamaica's capacity to facilitate wide scale COVID-19 testing for visitors to the island.

On the issue of vaccines, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that just recently we began the vaccination of people working in the *tourism* industry to ensure both their safety and that of our visitors. The inoculation of front-line workers in Jamaica's number one service sector will aid in the quick and full recovery of the industry.

Madam Speaker, sustainability is integral to the recovery process. Hence, as we seek to take the offensive and seize the opportunities in the crisis, we are implementing strategic measures to rebuild a product that is safe, equitable and generates economic opportunities for more Jamaicans.

Madam Speaker none of this would be possible without the strong and effective leadership of Prime Minister Andrew Holness and we must also thank Health Minister, Dr Christopher Tufton. He and his team have had to function under inarguably the most stressful time ever in an already challenged public health system. I want to pause then acknowledge and reaffirm our appreciation for their hard work, especially as we seek to keep the Jamaican economy afloat whilst battling Covid19.

Madam Speaker, we continue to provide much-needed support to assist *Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises (SMTEs)* within the industry who are reeling from the effects of COVID-19, including artisans and craft vendors, transportation providers, restaurants and eateries, bed and breakfasts, and farmers. TPDCo for example has and will be waiving in the region of J\$47 million in licensing fees from April 2020 to March 2022...

Within the last few months, we have built out a robust support structure for enterprises within the sector. The Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) has collaborated with key partners to create several initiatives geared towards helping SMTEs retool and rebound from COVID-19, including the provision of resilience packages, loan facilitation and Ministry of Finance and the Public Service grants.

TRAINING OF TOURISM WORKERS

During the pandemic, we increased our efforts to train our hospitality sector workers, as this will be key in the resetting of our tourism industry. Madam Speaker, we are committed to developing a competitive and productive workforce that can benefit from opportunities in the tourism and hospitality industry.

This is why it was important for us to establish the **Jamaica Centre of Tourism Innovation (JCTI)**, which is a division of the TEF, tasked specifically with facilitating the development of Jamaica's valuable human capital and supporting innovation for the tourism sector.

Since we began this initiative in 2018, it has facilitated the certification of some seven thousand one hundred and ninety-four (7,194) persons. This has been made possible through strategic partnerships with the Human Employment and Resource Training/National Service Training Agency Trust (HEART/NSTA Trust), Universal Service Fund (USF), National Restaurants Association (NRA), and the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI).

Madam Speaker, the JCTI is taking steps to move most of its certification programmes online and the AHLEI is in the process of upgrading its website to accommodate more online presentations.

Further, Madam Speaker, the JCTI is offering several middle management certification programmes, to include:

- Certified Food and Beverage Executive (CFBE)
- Certified Hospitality Housekeeping Executive (CHHE)
- Certified Hospitality Trainer (CHT)
- Certified Hotel Concierge (CHC)

In addition, 45 candidates have also taken their exams for the culinary arts certification offered by the American Culinary Federation (ACF).

Finally, the first cohort of the Hospitality and Tourism Management Programme (HTMP), rolled out in select high schools in September 2018, in concert with the Ministry of Education, Youth & Information, has completed their course of study.

Madam Speaker, these graduates have a certificate from the AHLEI and an Associate Degree in Customer Service and are ready to take up entry-level jobs in tourism. We believe that these young people, from all across the country, will help to boost the sector's competitiveness in the post-COVID-19 era.

My team will increase this focus on Human Capital Development and develop a Human Capital Strategy & Framework by 2022.

INVESTMENTS

Despite the challenges we have faced in our industry, our investment climate is positive. Madam Speaker, our goal to dramatically increase the number of hotel rooms is still on track and I can safely say that 90 per cent of the planned investments are still on target.

Over the next two years we will see the development of over 6,700 new rooms, over 20,000 new part time and full time jobs and in the region of US\$1.5 billion to \$US\$2 billion OR J\$220 billion to J\$300 billion in tourism investments. What a vote of confidence in Jamaica, Madam Speaker. Pandemic or no pandemic the confidence in Jamaica remains strong and we will continue to encourage tourism investments so that we can continue to lead the way in growing our economy in these challenging times. There will be broad opportunities for farmers, manufacturers, construction personnel and companies, insurers, bankers, drivers, tour guides and many many more.

Madam Speaker just last year, 2020, we welcomed:

- The development of the Chukka Ocean Outpost in Sandy Bay, Hanover, which is a US\$3 million investment in addition to multimillion dollar renovation projects across the sector. We were also happy with the ground-breaking for the US\$2 million Red Stripe Experience museum at the picturesque Rick's Café in Negril.

Now, Madam Speaker, to give a clearer picture of investor confidence in Destination Jamaica, investments for 2021-2023 are as follows:

- Princess Hotels, Green Island, Hanover – 2,000 rooms and a planned Casino

- Hard Rock Hotel & Casino multifaceted development, St. James – 1,700 rooms
- The former Jewels Dunns River and Runaway Bay properties were last year acquired by Sandals Resorts International. Out of that three new resorts will be built under the Sandals brand, Sandals Dunns River 1 and Sandals Dunns River 2 and a Beaches Runaway Bay. This will mean an additional 950 rooms
- Secrets will build a brand new hotel in St. Ann with just over 700 rooms and another new hotel alongside Secrets in St James with 280 rooms
- Oceans by H10, Trelawny – Phase 2 with 444 rooms
- Wyndham, Kingston – 300 rooms
- ROK Hotel, Kingston – 168 rooms
- Sandals, Negril – an additional 75 rooms

Madam Speaker, important to note too that the Harmonisation Group Limited (HGL) is also set to continue work on the Harmony Cove tourism project in Trelawny during the 2021/22 fiscal year. This development will include several luxury hotels, world-class golf courses, a luxury spa, marina facilities, commercial developments, private residencies, and other amenities and is expected to cost some US\$7.5 billion.

Add to that too Madam Speaker ongoing discussions with local and international Investors relating to a stream of small, medium and large tourism projects spanning Hotels, Villas, attractions and other amenities amounting to billions in investments and thousands of jobs. As these planned developments get the necessary approvals we will update this Honourable House fulsomely.

Also, Madam Speaker, this administration – Prime Minister, Minister Montague - have overseen billions of dollars expanding the island's two major airports, developing beach facilities, regenerating heritage sites, building and upgrading piers, supporting craft development and constructing a national highway network to seamlessly connect tourists, hoteliers, businesses and markets in quick time. We continue to create an enabling environment to foster increased investment in tourism as we build forward stronger. The tourism industry is an eco-system that must be ready to return to pre-COVID-19 earnings of US\$3.7 billion, which would allow us to bring back thousands of displaced tourism workers.

Madam Speaker, we are currently mapping out with players in our private sector Capital Markets, a potential contingency plan to make funding available for the recovery of the tourism sector should there be any systemic COVID-19 related issues with their existing financial arrangements. These, of course, are discussions which we will continue with our stakeholders and our Honourable Minister of Finance.

TRAVEL TRADE AWARDS

Madam Speaker, it would be remiss of me not to draw your attention to the outstanding awards that destination Jamaica received last year which demonstrate, in no uncertain terms, that the world recognizes us as trailblazers in international tourism.

At the 2020 World Travel Awards, Destination Jamaica as well as several local resorts and tourism partners came away big winners. We received the following accolades:

- World's Leading Family, Cruise and Wedding Destination
- World's Leading Luxury Hotel Villa (Fleming Villa at GoldenEye)
- World's Leading Villa Resort (Round Hill Hotel & Villas)
- World's Leading All-Inclusive Company (Sandals Resorts International)
- World's Leading All-Inclusive Family Resort Brand (Beaches Resorts)
- World's Leading Caribbean Attraction Company (Island Routes Caribbean Adventures)

PUBLIC BODY HIGHLIGHTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Madam Speaker, the road to recovery, would have been impossible without the work of our public bodies, which pivoted and adapted to the new normal almost instantly.

JAMAICA TOURIST BOARD

Madam Speaker, the rebound of our industry could not have been possible without the extensive work done by the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB) and our invaluable tourism partners like the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association.

I have high praises for our tourism partners, who have been integral to our successful navigation of these choppy seas; and because of this united front, we are seeing encouraging signs that the sector is getting back on its feet.

Madam Speaker, the JTB sprung quickly into action with the development of a number of campaigns and digital content series, such as the very successful *Rediscover Jamaica* Campaign and *Escape to Jamaica*, which were launched in July.

These initiatives and the scores of destination content created by the JTB in 2020, encouraged Jamaicans at home and abroad, along with foreign nationals looking for a vacation experience, to take advantage of our world-class tourism product and attractions.

Further madam speaker, these campaigns and particularly the Rediscover Jamaica mantra, proved to be successful demand creators as we received reports of up to 60 per cent occupancy from local bookings for some properties. While we have no empirical medical data, we are convinced that Jamaicans being encouraged to explore domestic travel, was a significant source of therapy for those who were reeling from extended periods of lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a major stimuli for the reboot of the local economy.

Madam Speaker, Jamaica has continued to maintain our strong aviation connectivity because of the relationships that our teams in the JTB have continued to harness, which remains another key pillar of our tourism recovery strategy.

The success of the JTB's innovative thinking did not go unnoticed. Madam Speaker, last month they won the Best Practice Gold Adrian Award for public relations excellence in Crisis Communications/Management, from the Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMIAI).

Some of their other projects include:

- *Sun, Sand, Sea and Everything in Between*, which is a MAJOR global recovery advertising campaign that has commenced rotation nationally in the United States on April 12, on all the major cable television networks including CNN, MSNBC, FOX will increase the demand for the destination by our most affluent and lucrative marketplace.
- *Luxury by Jamaica*, is a sought after market segment we in tourism have long felt is aspirational to the marketplace. Jamaica has some of the most luxurious experiences travellers demand. With Jamaica's world-class service and certifications to match, we have developed through engagement and collaboration, a marketing campaign to present these bespoke offers from our partners that will expand further the destination's allure to the well-healed and affluent traveller.

- *Virtual Tours of Jamaica* is a content series that provides inspiration to travellers to book Jamaica by providing short tours of the places in the destination such as Dunn's River Falls, Blue Lagoon in Portland, 7 Mile Beach in Negril, Exploring Montego Bay and the Rustic Luxury of the South Coast. In addition, Jamaica's generally presence in the virtual space has been a special achievement which started with the execution of the largest virtual wedding of 100 couples and continued with the largest ever Jamaica Product Exchange (JAPEX), all complimented by weekly destination webinars with the travel trade, hosted by JTB Regional Sales Teams.
- The wedding and honeymoon segment of the global travel and tourism industry, continues to be key to Jamaica's recovery strategy. The JTB launched a unique but promised expansion of the visitjamaica.com platform with a 'My Heartbeats JA' microsite, which allows our visitors to book their wedding, honeymoon or romantic getaways.

JAMAICA VACATIONS (JAMVAC)

Madam Speaker, we continue to invest in the development of cruise tourism, which is critical to the recovery of the sector. This process is being driven by JAMVAC. Despite a pandemic-induced standstill in the global cruise industry we are now seeing a glimmer of hope.

We are pivoting in this crisis to take advantage of a new collaborative approach that will bring greater value for passengers, cruise lines and Destination Jamaica.

We are working to not only attract the cruise lines back but identify how we can both benefit even more from these partnerships by way of spend and inclusiveness.

There are several areas being examined in discussions with our cruise partners, including more meaningful linkages, homeporting, multiple calls, increased jobs, increased value to local brands and improving the passenger experience, which should translate into higher spend per passenger.

Madam speaker, homeporting will provide much greater opportunities to strengthen linkages with other key sectors, such as agriculture and manufacturing. Cruise ports will see increased spend, which will benefit small businesses and entrepreneurs in the industry. With the reopening of cruise likely in June 2021, we are also anticipating 570,000 cruise ship visitors, which is a 100 per cent increase over the preceding period.

We are actively preparing for the return of cruise, as we know it will give us a much-needed boost to our economy. Over the past two years, the Government has spent billions of dollars upgrading and developing the ports in Ocho Rios, Falmouth and more recently Port Royal, to enhance the country's capacity to welcome more of the world's large cruise ships.

I want to assure this Honourable House that we are also putting protocols in place that will ensure that it will not only be a lucrative endeavour but one that is safe and seamless too.

Madam Speaker, I am happy to announce that we have finalized arrangements with the Norwegian Cruise Line to homeport one of their Breakaway Class vessels in Montego Bay, with service set to begin on August 7, 2021.

The vessel, which typically has an occupancy of approximately 3,800, passengers, will operate at 50 per cent capacity, in keeping with current COVID-19 protocols in place for the cruise shipping industry. Passengers will be required to be fully vaccinated and tested prior to boarding the vessel.

Madam Speaker, let me right here also thank Norwegian Cruise Lines for the planned donation of US\$1 million or just under J\$150 million to the Government of Jamaica to assist with our Covid19 management efforts. They too Mr Speaker fully understand that, the loss of tourism has resulted in significant economic hardship and that, along with their imminent return of cruising this summer, will provide much needed relief to the families, communities and small businesses who are extremely dependent on the tourism industry.

So, Madam Speaker, on this score, I am pleased to say that there is a new partnership emerging in the COVID-19 era between cruise lines and destinations like Jamaica, which has seen concrete steps being taken to incorporate more local suppliers into the cruise tourism value chain. This underscores how important homeporting is, as it will bring more value and serve as an economic driver that will benefit thousands of Jamaicans, including small entrepreneurs.

Additionally, Madam Speaker, the cruise lines are providing well-needed assistance in building out the health infrastructure needed to facilitate the return of cruise tourism in a safe and seamless manner.

Madam Speaker, as it relates to the general return of cruise shipping as we know it, the situation remains fluid but there are high hopes that a breakthrough is likely late summer 2021, which would see a phased return of cruise tourism between the United States and the Caribbean.

Madam Speaker, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued new guidance to the cruise shipping industry, including the need for COVID-19 vaccinations, a necessary step before passenger voyages can resume.

The new technical instructions, the first update since October, include increasing from weekly to daily the reporting frequency of COVID-19 cases and illnesses, and implementing routine testing of all crew based on a ship's COVID-19 status as well as establishing a plan and timeline for vaccination of crew and port personnel.

TOURISM ENHANCEMENT FUND

The Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF), in particular, played a significant role in assisting tourism entities, primarily to our SMTEs, when they were forced to close their businesses.

We provided much-needed relief to our SMTEs, who are beneficiaries of the EXIM Bank and JNSBL facilities, by providing a moratorium of over 12 months from April 2020 to the present.

As mentioned earlier, in July 2020, TEF provided 500 COVID-19 protective kits, valued at more than \$15 million, to small tourism properties island wide. These kits, valued at more than \$30,000 each, included two touchless garbage bins, two touchless hand sanitizer dispensers and two infrared thermometers.

Other projects completed by the TEF in 2020 include:

- Work on the country's first Artisan Village at Hampden Wharf in Falmouth, Trelawny, valued at \$750 million, which is slated to be operational by July.
- Launching the new \$16 million headquarters of the White River Fish Sanctuary, located on the Old White River Road in St. Ann, last August.
- Completion of the \$1.3 billion Harmony Beach Park in Montego Bay, in partnership with the Urban Development Corporation (UDC). Madam Speaker, this project forms part of the UDC's efforts to focus on projects that will offer major climate resilient infrastructure and sustainable public spaces for residents and visitors.

Madam Speaker, the Tourism Enhancement Fund also implemented a \$6 million tourism linkages backyard gardening project in Lilliput, St. James, which will be expanded across the island to enable even more Jamaicans to benefit from the

tourism sector. The project assisted ten young men and women with receiving certification from the HEART/NSTA as Certified Vegetable Farmers.

Work on the National Beach Development Programme is also set to continue, with 10 beaches projected to be upgraded over the next three years. These beaches are Watson Taylor Park in Hanover; Success, St. James; Priory, St. Ann; Rio Nuevo, St. Mary; Murdock Beach, St. Mary; Winnifred Beach, Portland; Rocky Point, St. Thomas; Guts River, Manchester; Alligator Pond, St. Elizabeth and Crane Road in St. Elizabeth.

Tourism Linkages Network (A Division of TEF)

The Tourism Linkages Council, chaired by Adam Stewart, has proven to be very critical during the COVID-19 pandemic in assisting our Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Tourism has been aggressively facilitating linkages through our Tourism Linkages Network, which oversees and implements a wide range of projects and initiatives. Primarily, it assists with supporting product development, assisting with capacity building of SMTE's, deepening public-private sector collaboration and building networks and connections between tourism and non-tourism players.

Madam Speaker, the Tourism Linkages Network, which is a division of the TEF, has yielded great success during this pandemic and serves as a prime example of what can be achieved if a robust framework is put in place to strengthen linkages

between tourism and other key sectors. The end result will be the development of a more inclusive tourism sector; greater economic growth and job creation; as well as the retention of more of our tourism earnings.

Madam Speaker, during the last financial year, we were forced to pivot from the traditional methods of carrying out our projects. However, we forged ahead and hosted our signature “big ticket” events such as, the *Christmas in July Trade Show*, *Style Jamaica Shopping Showcase*, the *Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee Festival*, *Jamaica Health and Wellness Tourism Conference*, *Spa Standards Sensitization Workshops*, the *Jamaica Rum Festival* and our *Speed Networking event* – using virtual formats.

The Network also hosted a successful virtual Gastronomy Forum series to prepare the culinary industry for the rebound of the tourism sector, including presentations on innovation in gastronomy; developing destination restaurants; social media and digital marketing, as well as talent development.

Madam Speaker, our *Speed Networking event* has proven to be particularly successful. In fact, of the 110 suppliers who participated in 2019, the 40 per cent that responded to requests for information, reported receiving contracts valued at some \$49.5 million.

Madam Speaker, I strongly believe that the Linkages Network has served as a driving force in our efforts to revolutionize our tourism sector by bolstering the linkages with agriculture and other key sectors.

TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

The Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCo) also plays a key role in our mission to build forward stronger. Madam Speaker, as mentioned previously, TPDCo has been critical to the development and implementation of the COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols that guided the reopening of the sector in June last year.

The protocols were developed in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Health and Wellness, to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Madam Speaker, to ensure that these protocols were enforced and adopted, they trained more than 26,000 tourism workers. Madam Speaker, this year, more than 800 tourism workers have been re-sensitized about the COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols.

Madam Speaker, TPDCo has embarked on several impactful projects under their flagship Spruce Up Jamaica '**Pon Di Corner**' programme. A key component of the programme allows for all sixty-three (63) members of parliament to select a project in their constituency that will improve and enhance the community tourism component of TPDCo's local tourism development mandate.

There was the refurbishing of the Trench Town Entertainment Park in South St. Andrew in February at a cost of \$39.7 million. The project is expected to figure in job creation, training and overall community development through tourism, among other activities.

Also, the upgrading of the Porto Bello Community Centre in Porto Bello, St. James, at a cost of \$4.7 million.

Among the other noteworthy projects was the creation of a walking/jogging trail, which provided a suitable space within the Roehampton community of St. Andrew, for residents, particularly the elderly to safely undertake their daily exercise. This was done at a cost of \$4,000,920.

The Rocky Valley Community in Stony Hill benefited from the construction of a Computer Centre at their community centre. This two-phased project saw infrastructural development in the first phase and the purchase and installation of computers and a printer in the second phase at a cost of \$5,123,638.

Madam Speaker, rehabilitation work on the Spring Garden All-Age School in Spring Valley, a rural community in St. Catherine, was completed at a cost of approximately \$4 million dollars. The school serves children from nearby communities such as Bushy Park, Lloyd's Pen, Church Pen, Gordon Wood, Island Farm, Old Harbour, Old Harbour Bay, Big Pond, McCook's Pen, Bartons and Spanish Town. The replacement of the defective materials at the institution has had a significant impact on the beneficiaries.

Over in the parish of Trelawny, the construction of bathroom facilities at Litchfield football field has enabled the community to increase the utilization of the amenity to host sporting and other community activities. It included the construction of a sewerage system, creation of a water storage facility, plumbing and installation of

male/female toilets complete with wash basins and stalls. This project was executed to the tune of \$6,876,973.

In Annotto Bay, St. Mary, the loading bays at the transportation centre were seriously dilapidated, which necessitated the construction of taxi loading bays. At a cost of \$3.9 million, a new roof was installed, concrete works done, and a general facelift given to the space, much to the delight of residents.

Madam Speaker, the Spruce Up Jamaica 'Pon Di Corner' programme touches many facets of life and so work is ongoing for the construction of the Greenvale Music Studio. This entails the retrofitting of a room at the Greenvale Community Centre Building into a recording studio. The concept was inspired by the many musical greats who were born and raised in Manchester. This studio would be a first in the southern region and Jamaicans with musical talent would have easier access to generate musical hits. To date, over \$8 million has been expended on this innovative project.

Another impactful project, Madam Speaker, is the painting of murals in the community of Frazer's Content in West Central St. Catherine. This project was a joint initiative; it included the removal of zinc fences and the construction of a concrete wall by the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation and the painting of murals on the walls. This enhanced the aesthetics of the community to the tune of \$1.5 million.

Port Antonio, Portland, benefited from a newly constructed Pocket Park at the Old Railway Station. This project involved the construction of a gazebo, concrete

benches, brick paved walkways, wooden perimeter fencing and landscaping with grass and palm trees. This park adds to the aesthetic appeal of the town and the already tranquil nature of this parish. The contract sum was just under \$2 million.

Madam Speaker, other key initiatives for the TPDCo include:

- A virtual tourism youth expo and career fair hosted last month, under the theme 'Tourism in the New Normal, the Gateway to Success'.
- Donation of a box truck, valued at approximately \$7 million, to Recycling Partners of Jamaica Limited (RPJ) as part of the Government's commitment to environmental protection.

MILK RIVER HOTEL & SPA AND BATH FOUNTAIN HOTEL

Madam Speaker, our renowned Milk River Hotel and Spa and Bath Fountain Hotel, will soon receive additional development, through the amendment of the Bath of the Apostle and Milk River Acts.

Through amendment of these Acts, Madam Speaker, public-private partnerships for Milk River Hotel and Spa and Bath Fountain Hotel, will be sought to enable their development into world-class facilities.

RESILIENCE DIPLOMACY

Madam Speaker, the focus in 2021 has largely shifted to ensuring the rapid global deployment of vaccination to the world's worst affected regions, which is seen as

absolutely critical to winning the global fight against COVID-19 as well as to restore the global economy to some measure of normalcy in the shortest time possible.

To this end, Madam Speaker, as at April 17, 2021, more than 878 million vaccine doses have been administered worldwide, equal to 11 doses for every 100 people.

While I welcome this strong global interest and enthusiasm around COVID-19 vaccination efforts, there are several concerns. One, at the current rate of daily global vaccination, it will take roughly 5 years to cover 75 per cent of the population with a two-dose vaccine, according to *Bloomberg Research*. This current lethargic pace has to dramatically hasten, as global economic recovery efforts cannot wait five years, especially among the worst affected economies.

Secondly, there is great disparity in the global distribution of vaccines. Madam Speaker, the picture that is emerging is that advanced countries appear to be largely rejecting a united approach in favour of reinforcing inequalities on the basis of national citizenship. The World Health Organization (WHO) has consequently warned that the world is on the brink of a “catastrophic moral failure” as poor countries risk falling behind on account of the fact that vaccine rollouts in advanced economies are largely outpacing those in emerging and developing economies.

The solution is clear: access to vaccination among these countries needs to be improved rapidly. It is for this reason that I have used my platform as the Chair of the *Organization of American States (OAS) Inter-American Committee on Tourism (CITUR)* Working Group to share my views on this important issue, as well

as to advocate for effective measures that will ensure that we can facilitate the effective and timely recovery of the travel and tourism sectors.

THE WAY FORWARD

Jamaica has emerged as a world leader in developing innovative responses to the crisis, which successfully guided the reopening of the sector in a safe and seamless manner.

Madam Speaker, we have done this because we recognize that it is imperative that the sector survives during and beyond the current crisis so that it can continue to fulfil its vital role as a significant catalyst of global economic recovery and growth.

A key aspect of our strategy moving forward will be to target GEN-C travellers. That is, travellers whose experiences and expectations have been shaped by the health and safety risks of the pandemic, the requirements for social distancing and enhanced hygiene, the requirements for testing, quarantines, and vaccines to travel, and the psychological impacts of lock downs, which build demand for escape and exploration.

With vaccines arriving for many and on the horizon for others, a growing number of GEN-C travellers are acting on their wanderlust and considering or even booking vacations.

However, for us to fully capitalize on this, we must use this pandemic, and the changes in the sector that come with it, as an opportunity to build forward stronger, to better facilitate the needs of the GEN-C traveller.

BLUE OCEAN FRAMEWORK

Madam Speaker, the strategic framework for resetting Jamaica's tourism will be guided by the **Blue Ocean Strategy**. It will allow us to meet our growth targets of five million visitors, five billion dollars and five thousand new rooms by 2025.

A Blue Ocean Strategy calls for the creation of business models that depart from traditional models based on competition and standardization. It will see our Ministry pursuing enhanced value-creation, through product differentiation and diversification, which will allow Destination Jamaica to open up new markets and create new demand in a unique and uncontested space.

Over the long term, a vital component of the Blue Ocean Strategy will be to strengthen the systems for tourism zoning and theming, so that the unique characteristics of each destination area will be preserved and enhanced to support their own distinct brand appeal.

Resetting Jamaica's tourism will identify and establish innovative policies, systems, protocols, and standards that assure our visitors a safer, secure, and seamless experience while building out a new national tourism model based on a diversified portfolio of unique and authentic attractions and activities, which draw heavily on Jamaica's natural and cultural assets.

JAMAICA CARES

With this in mind, Madam Speaker, we are in the process of introducing a groundbreaking initiative dubbed - **JAMAICA CARES**.

Covid-secure

Authentic

Resilient

Engaged

Seamless

Timed in conjunction with new travel requirements for international travellers, JAMAICA CARES amplifies themes of safe and seamless travel. Madam Speaker, the debut of a refreshed destination marketing positioning creates a meaningful opportunity to create and implement a dedicated communications campaign rooted in Jamaica's resilience and commitment to the needs of others.

It is an innovative end-to-end travel protection and emergency services programme that provides visitors with cost of medical care, evacuations, field rescue, case management and patient advocacy in all circumstances up to and including natural disasters. As it relates to COVID-19, the protection plan also covers testing for symptomatic travellers, quarantine/isolation in a medical facility or sanctioned quarantine facilities and evacuation, if necessary.

Madam Speaker, JAMAICA CARES galvanizes the destination-wide tourism COVID-19 response and encompasses our industry-leading Resilient Corridors, extensive health and safety protocols, entry testing, COVID-19 training for hospitality workers, travel authorization, and much more.

Madam Speaker, I want to assure this Honourable House that JAMAICA CARES will do more than just provide health protection, emergency medical and crisis response services as one suite of offerings from a globally recognized firm or firms collaborating with local insurance and other service providers.

Madam Speaker, JAMAICA CARES epitomizes our stewardship of the recovery from this global pandemic by providing destination assurance that will allow travellers to know that we have taken due care in providing for their safety while in Jamaica, and that we communicate widely and effectively the values of the destination.

BUILDING FORWARD STRONGER – A NEW APPROACH TO RESETTING TOURISM

Madam Speaker, the marketing and promotional challenges created by the pandemic have provided an opportunity for recalibration and reengineering of strategies that were already in motion. Indeed, Madam Speaker, COVID-19

presents an opportunity to Build Forward Stronger through the application of our Blue Ocean Strategy, so that we can:

- Attract a diverse set of visitors who want a uniquely Jamaican experience,
- Leverage local linkages for the supplies and tourism experiences and,
- Build a future that is even more resilient, safe and sustainable.

We have created a six-step plan to achieve this, which includes:

1. Expanding markets and go-to market channels
2. Developing New Tourism Products
3. Expanding our tourism community focus
4. Maximizing linkages across all local Industries
5. Promote Resilience and sustainability
6. Provide Destination Assurance

Expanding Markets

Madam Speaker, the global recovery campaign will also be twinned with a robust domestic recovery initiative geared towards engagement of local residents and the Diaspora community. We will be capitalizing on the many benefits to be had from long standing relationships with key tourism partners and strategic alliances with the largest wholesale travel planners. This, naturally, includes greater collaboration

with hoteliers to offer more value deals for summer and fall 2021 and the start of winter 2022.

However, it will also focus on marketing to our traditional visitors, who seek an ideal location to bask in sun, sea and sand. We will be creating special campaigns appealing to nature tourists, who seek to explore our unique landscape, flora and fauna; experientialists, who travel to experience culture, heritage and community tourism; as well as our boutique luxury visitors.

Madam Speaker, some of these travellers will continue to use traditional means such as direct booking and travel agents or tour operators. However, others will access our offerings using a myriad of digital platforms. We will engage all forms of media, prioritizing digital marketing, as it allows us to reach a broader audience and gives us the opportunity to target our desired audience and select specifically where we want our messages seen and heard.

New Products

Our research has shown that the GEN-C traveller will crave new products in destinations that have the necessary infrastructure in place, and which ensure an extremely safe, yet memorable experience. We will first focus on attracting a wider and more balanced range of high-quality investments in accommodation,

attractions, and activities, which cannot be replicated by our competition, so that we can return the tourism sector to a growth trajectory.

Madam Speaker, we must utilize locally sourced products and increase our local capacity to deliver them with superior quality and consistency, to ensure they will continue to keep Jamaica top-of-mind for upcoming vacations.

Madam Speaker, we will therefore be seeking to develop community spaces for Jamaicans and visitors alike, to gather safely to experience our local artisan products, food and entertainment. One such centre will be our first artisan village, which is set to open later this year in Falmouth. Our goal is to establish one artisan village in each destination area by 2025.

Technology is one of the tools that is expected to play a new, exciting and far-reaching role in the 'new tourism' that is emerging. Guest and worker safety has led to a growing appreciation for mobile technology and contactless services in the hospitality sector. However, long before COVID-19, the new technology had upended the travel and tourism industry, most profoundly, changing traveller behaviour and expectations. From online booking platforms to virtual reality as well as chatbots and keyless entry, new technology has greatly changed the way people travel.

The pandemic requires that the tourism sector accelerates its digitalization and makes technological innovation a priority. Efforts to adapt have given rise to hybrid events, which take place at a physical venue while allowing the audience to engage in interaction on its virtual platform as well. The Jamaica Blue Mountain

Coffee Festival, Speed Networking, Jamaica Product Exchange (JAPEX) and many of our other events have pivoted to digital platforms with great success. Madam Speaker, we will continue to leverage technology to revolutionize our tourism sector and tap into new and emerging markets, while appealing to tech-savvy travellers.

St. Thomas Tourism Development Project

Madam Speaker, we remain committed to adding depth and diversity to our tourism product while providing economic viability in communities beyond Jamaica's traditional resort areas. This will lay the foundation for a more equitable, sustainable and inclusive tourism sector that benefits all Jamaicans. It is for this reason we are forging ahead with our plans to develop new resort areas, in places such as St. Thomas, which is the new frontier.

We have made significant headway with the development of the support framework that will include product development, training, improvement of relevant infrastructure, and access to financing for rural communities.

The St. Thomas Tourism Destination Development & Management Plan has been completed and will be unveiled within the fiscal year. The Plan has identified 51 projects for implementation over the next decade to 2030, of which 40 projects will be led by the Ministry of Tourism. The Destination Assessment of St. Thomas identified that the parish has numerous attractions and places suitable for the development of tourist accommodation of various types, which should appeal to a wide cross-section of prospective visitors. Its close proximity to Kingston and

especially to the Normal Manley International Airport suggests that considerable tourism development is possible, which will serve as a catalyst for the wider social and economic development of the parish.

We will then complete work on the Negril Development Plan and the Tourism Strategy & Action Plan.

Tourism Incubator and Funding

Madam Speaker, we intend to establish a tourism incubator to nurture new and start-up tourism enterprises. We will initiate discussions with potential partners, such as the University of Technology Jamaica, the University of the West Indies (Mona), Jamaica Business Development Corporation (JBDC) and Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO) by 2023 to foster innovative ideas on how we can differentiate our sector from our competition, in keeping with our Blue Ocean Strategy. We will also be seeking partnerships for the provision of grants and loans to support the development and commercialization of ideas generated from the incubator.

Investment Facilitation Framework and Strategy

These products and services will require targeted investments and provide an opportunity to bring more Jamaicans into the tourism value chain as producers. We will therefore work with the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce, JAMPRO and JBDC to develop a fulsome Tourism Investment Strategy to generate

greater investment in attractions, activities, entertainment and niche accommodation.

Community Tourism

During this post-COVID-19 era, we want to introduce our visitors to more community tourism experiences. This increased variety of experiences, will give the visitor the feeling of having a 'multi-destination' vacation, without ever leaving our shores.

Madam Speaker, our new marketing packages will encourage our visitors to take excursions to local shopping establishments, restaurants, entertainment facilities and bars. We will also encourage them to wander along our beaches, rivers or a local fishing village. Critical to our shift to increased awareness of our community tourism offerings will be targeted campaigns focusing on our many cultural and heritage sites.

Increased Linkages

Madam Speaker, our linkages network has proven to be a successful model. However, there is so much more that we can do to ensure that more Jamaicans benefit from our industry and that tourism earning retention is increased from 40 per cent to 45 per cent by 2025. Our robust plans will focus on a complete revamping of our linkages network to accomplish this goal.

We will be broadening the network's mandate to aid the increased capacity of local suppliers to provide more to the industry. Key areas of focus will include construction and infrastructure; gastronomy; furnishings and décor; in-room amenities; as well as craft and clothing.

Our Goals are clear, we will:

- Implement projects that increase the commercial linkages between tourism and non-tourism enterprises
- Implement projects that increase the contribution to GDP from non-accommodation tourism sub-sectors
- Infuse more tourism spend directly into the local economy
- Establish Jamaica as a regional hub for tourism supplies and services

Resilience and Sustainability

Madam Speaker, the devastating effects of COVID-19 on the global economy has forced many destinations, particularly those of tourism dependent countries, to find new ways to strengthen their resilience and to increase their sustainability.

As the industry moves to be more resilient and sustainable, we will be developing the Sustainable Framework & Strategy, comprising policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks with sufficient inducements to stimulate the development of supply and productive capacity where sustainable goods and services are concerned. This will fill gaps in the supply side so that we can retain more of the US dollars earned by the industry.

Madam Speaker, our research has shown that tourism can be impacted by a myriad of crises, which are becoming the new norm. These include:

- Economic/Financial Crises
- Geopolitical Instability
- Natural Disasters
- Pandemics/Health Crises
- Climate Change

Jamaica has been a pioneer in Resilience and Sustainability with the commendable work being done by the Tourism Linkages Network, as well as the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC), which focuses solely on the constant development of resilience strategies.

These include but are not limited to frameworks for responsiveness to the pandemic; climate change mitigation methodologies; preparedness and scenario planning; and rapid response mechanisms for incidents. It is therefore critical that we remain as thought-leaders in resilient and sustainable tourism.

However, we will be increasing our efforts in resilience, so that the sector can withstand man-made and natural shocks. I have charged my Ministry to develop a Resilient Tourism Framework & Strategy, which will be completed in due course, Madam Speaker.

Just recently, Madam Speaker, I chaired a global tourism summit with St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves and global tourism partners to discuss recovery efforts for the island.

The bringing together of global tourism leaders is critical in providing a platform to generate support for St. Vincent and the Grenadines which is in dire need of help following the recent volcanic eruption.

From a tourism standpoint, the latest development will obviously set back the recovery of the tourism and travel sector in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and other affected countries including the heavily tourism-dependent Barbados indefinitely.

The meeting, Madam Speaker, included several members of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) and Organization of American States (OAS), regional Ministers of Tourism as well as over 150 high level tourism stakeholders.

Destination Assurance

Destination assurance is key to future tourism success. It is a promise to visitors that assures an authentic, safe and seamless experience, which is respectful to the community and environment.

This has been a key aspect of our tourism model over the years and we have adjusted this to better meet the needs of the GEN-C traveller who have a vested interest in unique experiences which are safe. These new measures have resulted in Jamaica being globally recognized as providing leadership in tourism COVID-19 management arrangements.

Last November, we submitted the Green Paper for the Destination Assurance Framework and Strategy (DAFS), and I am happy to announce that we have made significant progress on this. The Green Paper for the DAFS will be submitted to Cabinet by the end of the first quarter of the current fiscal year. This document aims to ensure that the integrity, quality and standards of Jamaica's tourism product are maintained.

Madam Speaker, we will be placing special focus on reducing instances of visitor harassment and poor solid waste management practices. We intend to launch a programme in each Resort Destination for the re-socialization and skills upgrading of informal operators in the tourism sector and the formalization of the activities of persons who are trained and empowered with skills.

Madam Speaker, this entire strategic push will be supported by a strong legislative agenda, which will include amending the Tourist Board Act, the Travel Agency Act and their accompanying Regulations. In this way, the Government will modernize the provisions of these Acts, strengthen enforcement provisions, and improve our tourism product.

Conclusion

Madam Speaker, the future of tourism in Jamaica is looking bright, despite the challenges we have and continue to face because of COVID-19. As you have heard, our vision speaks to strategic initiatives and partnerships that will diversify our product, build human capital and expand linkages with other sectors, while

targeting new markets, driving a more collaborative approach to our tourism sector, while still ensuring that the growing tourism industry benefits all Jamaicans.

Madam Speaker, resetting our tourism sector to build forward stronger, can only be achieved by focusing on building strong local capacity with a relentless focus on quality. We must stabilize the industry while creating an incubator for more inclusive enterprises and also focus on building a strong enabling environment.

Madam Speaker, by applying the Blue Ocean Strategy to reset tourism, the sector will, within the first two years, return to its pre-COVID-19 performance with arrivals and economic returns.

We will therefore continue to push forward with a spirit of hope for a brighter future, which is prosperous for every Jamaican. Together, we have an opportunity to build forward stronger – tourism for shared Jamaican prosperity in 2021 and beyond.

Thank you, stay safe and God bless you.