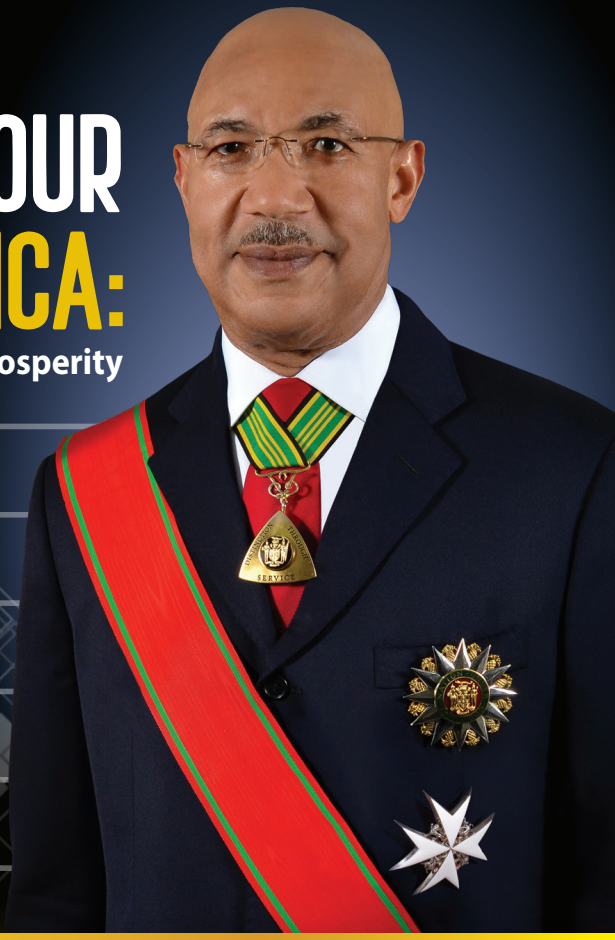
THRONE SPEECH 2022

BUILDING OUR JAMAICA:

Peace, Opportunity and Prosperity



Houses of Parliament, Gordon House
Kingston, Jamaica

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 10, 2022

Delivered by:
His Excellency the Most Hon.
Sir Patrick Allen, ON, GCMG, CD, KSt.J
Governor-General

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Honourable Members,

This year is our 60th year of Independence. As we celebrate, let us honour the contributions and heroic sacrifices of those who laid the foundation on which we continue to build.

Our 60 years of political independence have had many challenges, but Jamaica remains a strong, resilient, democratic and free nation, with huge potential and opportunities to build our peace and prosperity.

Jamaica has made significant strides in key measures of human development, in health, shelter, social protection, education, infrastructure, and public administration, since our Independence.

Internationally, Jamaica is a respected voice in the community of nations and we have a strong brand and place in popular culture. One area of national success over the past decade, is the significant progress made in strengthening the management of our economy and entrenching macro-economic stability through a series of unprecedented legislative and institutional reforms.

Our ability to withstand the COVID-19 pandemic, the worst global health and economic crisis in 100 years, is the most tangible evidence of Jamaica's resilience and how far we have come in our quest for economic independence.

As we move into the next phase of our journey as an independent nation, our Government is already laying the foundation, to build a Jamaica of **Peace, Opportunity and Prosperity**.

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Honourable Members, the recovery effort from the pandemic will take all hands on deck. The Government will lead the engagement of all its critical partners to craft a new Social Partnership for Strong Recovery and Sustainable Development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical importance of establishing the unique identity of each citizen to provide efficient, timely and targeted services by the Government. With the passage of the National Identification and Registration Act, the implementation of the National Identification System (NIDS) is now fully underway. This is a critical milestone in our digital transformation. In this our 60th year, we will pass the associated regulations for the Act and issue our first National Identification cards.

The Culture, Health, Arts, Sports and Education (CHASE) Fund was proactive in the health and education sectors through key interventions such as the acquisition of a genome sequencer enabling us to test for variants of the corona and other viruses.

Honourable Members, the Jamaica Education Transformation Commission has delivered a well-studied report on a roadmap of recommendations for fundamental transformation of education. An Education Transformation Oversight Committee (ETOC) comprising key stakeholders, including the Opposition, will be responsible for monitoring and publicly reporting on the progress of implementation.

> **"In our 60th year as an independent nation, we must commit to the transformation of our education system to provide our children with 21st century skills in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM).**

In our 60th year as an independent nation, we must commit to the transformation of our education system to provide our children with 21st century skills in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM). It is the best route to secure **Peace, Opportunity and Prosperity** for our people.

Last month saw the switching on of the first Digital Television transmitter in Jamaica using the ATSC 3.0 standard, making Jamaica the third country in the world to adopt this standard. This marks the beginning of a revolutionary change in how Jamaicans consume television services. Our progress towards a truly digital

society is well on the way and digital switchover is essential to achieving that ultimate goal.

Housing continues to be a major priority of the Government. The National Housing Trust (NHT) wrote 6,924 loans with a value of $24.1 billion between April 2021 and December 2021 and is on course to write over 8,000 loans by the end of the financial year. The NHT currently has 12,019 housing solutions under construction in addition to 24,580 housing solutions in planning across the island.

MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Members, in building a nation of **Peace, Opportunity and Prosperity**, the Government has been taking significant steps at bolstering Jamaica's economic resilience. In July 2021, Jamaica, supported by the World Bank, launched a historic Catastrophe Bond (CAT Bond) becoming the first Caribbean country, and the first Small Island Developing State (SIDS), to independently sponsor such a bond. The instrument provides financial protection of up to US$185 million against losses from named storms for three (3) Atlantic tropical cyclone seasons, ending December 2023.

In May 2021, Jamaica acceded to the International Convention on the Simplification and Harmonization of Customs Procedures known as the Revised Kyoto Convention. This is the blueprint for modern and efficient customs procedures in the 21st century and will facilitate full streamlining of processes and procedures.

The Government will begin implementation of a comprehensive restructuring of public sector compensation. This will simplify the current complicated three hundred and twenty-five (325) salary scales and eliminate most of the one hundred and eighty-five (185) allowances so that, in most cases, compensation will consist of a salary payment only, while ensuring that no one is worse off. This allows for full transparency whilst ensuring that jobs are adequately compensated.

The Bank of Jamaica will roll out our own digital Jamaican dollar in 2022 after a successful pilot during 2021. This will serve as a foundation for Jamaica's digital payments architecture and will

facilitate greater financial inclusion, increase transaction velocity while reducing the cost of banking for the Jamaican people.

This is a big step in building a nation of **Peace, Opportunity and Prosperity**.

MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

Our economy is recovering with seven to nine per cent growth projected for the fiscal year ending March 2022 and employment continues its steady recovery. This resilience to the external shock of the pandemic is due in part to the integrated and collaborative nature of the regulatory, development and support functions of the Government in securing the sustainable balance between our natural assets and our economic priorities which is essential to our **Peace, Opportunity and Prosperity**.

The Government has been moving forward with implementation of a number of large infrastructure projects. The Southern Coastal Highway Improvement project is at an advanced stage of implementation. Construction has begun on a four-lane roadway from Harbour View to Yallahs, and on 10 of the planned 15 construction packages.

Master planning and design for the Morant Bay Urban Centre have been completed and loan financing secured. This integrated town centre and commercial complex along with the highway improvements will be a game changer for the people of St. Thomas.

Honourable Members, you will be pleased to know that work on construction of Jamaica's new Houses of Parliament will commence during this, our 60th year of Independence.

The 20,000 square-foot Kingston Logistics Park located on lands contiguous to the Kingston Container Terminal has been completed. This is part of the Government's overall plan to establish Jamaica as a Global Logistics Hub.

The process of divestment of lands under The Greater Bernard Lodge Development Project is underway. Water and sewer infrastructure is being installed and housing developments have already begun. The intention is to create a sustainable integrated township that is vibrant and resilient and provides opportunities for affordable housing, modern living, and access to jobs and amenities.

In December 2021, the Government gazetted the Order designating the Black River landscape/seascape in St. Elizabeth as a protected area under the Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act. This will help to preserve the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

The long-awaited gazetting of the Cockpit Country Protected Area boundaries, will be brought to Parliament in this legislative year. Additionally, the Government will promulgate new legislation to enable the creation and regulation of a National Protected Areas System that is representative of Jamaica's ecological and cultural heritage. The legislation will include harmonised provisions for management of private lands in protected areas under a new comprehensive statute.

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MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

In building a nation of **Peace, Opportunity and Prosperity**, the security of our citizens is of paramount importance.

The Government is significantly expanding capacity of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) by increasing the intake, training and deployment of personnel from the current average of approximately 500 to 1,500 annually.

Existing infrastructure is also being upgraded with over 100 police facilities renovated and eight (8) new facilities constructed since

the commencement of Project ROC, the Rebuild, Overhaul and Construct Project.

The Government is modernising our law enforcement and criminal justice systems by increasing reliance on forensic science to investigate crimes and secure convictions. Ground was broken in November 2021 for the construction of the country's first forensic pathology autopsy suite. This is the final component of the upgrading of the Institute of Forensic Science and Legal Medicine to a world-class forensic pathology unit.

> **"The strategic investments that have been made in the security infrastructure of the country have had a significant impact on major crimes.**

The new electronic Traffic Ticket Management System (TTMS) will enhance public order and safety by ensuring that tickets and related information will be accurate and readily available to support the efficient enforcement of fines and penalties.

The strategic investments that have been made in the security infrastructure of the country have had a significant impact on major crimes. Overall incidence of major crimes declined by 51% from 10,711 in 2011 to 5,222 in 2021. However, our homicide rate remains unacceptably high and gunmen and gangs continue to threaten our peace and safety.

In addition to other strategies to combat crime and violence; the Government has rolled out a targeted "Operation Get Every Illegal Gun". It includes, but is not limited to, special operations by the security forces and a reward system.

The Enhanced Security Measures implemented by the Government have shown success. In seven (7) vulnerable communities currently declared as Zones of Special Operations (ZOSOs), cumulative incidents of murders declined by 63% and shootings declined by 77%.

Similarly, murders decreased by an average of 42% and shootings decreased by an average of 43% under States of Public Emergency (SOEs). Notably, murders increased by an average of 42% and shootings increased by an average of 35%, after discontinuation of the SOEs.

The recent passage of the Criminal Administration (Suppression of Criminal Organizations) (Amendment) Act is geared towards dismantling gangs, depriving them of their illicit wealth and prosecuting their facilitators and benefactors. Since its passage, there have been thirty-nine (39) convictions involving eleven (11) accused persons.

Additionally, amendments were passed to the:

- Corrections Act, and the
- Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression and Punishment) (Amendment) Act.

As a matter of priority, the Government is pressing ahead with the development of several new and revised pieces of legislation. These include:

1. Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulation) Bill, which will be tabled today
2. Review of the Corrections Act
3. Development of Enhanced Security Measures Bill
4. Development of Security Personnel Integrity Bill, and
5. Development of a National Intelligence and Security Bill

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Honourable Members, the Government has continued its efforts to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several field hospitals were established which increased the bed complement and capacity of the health system to provide care for COVID-19 cases.

Vaccination is available through established sites, mobile units, blitzes and private providers.

The Government has continued its multi-pronged strategy to tackle non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by improving management and access to services and reducing behavioural risk factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity.

In our 60th year of Independence, the Government will commence the largest health-care infrastructure development undertaken since Independence.

The plan, which is being jointly funded by the European Union and Inter-American Development Bank, will see upgrades to thirteen (13) health facilities comprising three (3) hospitals and ten (10) health centres. The Spanish Town, St. Ann's Bay, and May Pen hospitals will be upgraded.

The health centres to be upgraded are:

- Greater Portmore
- St. Jago Park
- Old Harbour
- St. Ann's Bay
- Ocho Rios
- Brown's Town
- May Pen East
- May Pen West
- Mocho, and the
- Chapelton Community Hospital

In addition, upgrading of the building and equipment at the University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI) is in the design phase, and build out work continues at Cornwall Regional Hospital and the Western Children and Adolescent Hospital.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND YOUTH

Honourable Members, during the last year, the pandemic continued its relentless disruption of the education sector. However, we are steadily and safely returning more of our students to face-to-face classes.

The Government has launched a major initiative called Yard-to-Yard Find the Child, to identify and re-engage students who did not access any of the learning modalities.

The pandemic accelerated the Government's plans to provide access to technology for all our students. The Government's procurement efforts, the Own Your Own Device (OYOD) programme and the One Laptop or Tablet per Child initiative together provided approximately 150,000 devices to enable virtual learning. This enormous push benefited students on the PATH programme and other needy families.

As we seek to develop creators rather than mere consumers of technology, the Government has commenced a phased roll out of coding in primary and secondary schools, starting with our teachers.

The long overdue Jamaica Teaching Council Bill was finally tabled in Parliament. The Bill seeks to bring structure and standards to teaching. Work is also advancing on amendments to the Education Act, the Children (Adoption of) (Amendment) Bill and the Child Care and Protection (Amendment) Bill.

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MINISTRY OF TOURISM

Honourable Members, tourism continued its remarkable recovery in 2021 recording three consecutive quarters of growth. The 2021 calendar year ended with a strong showing of over 1.6 million visitors and US$2 billion in earnings.

The industry's success can be attributed to strong collaboration between the public and private sectors in implementing the Tourism COVID-19 Recovery Framework. A Tourism Vaccination Task Force was also established to drive the vaccination of the

island's 170,000 tourism workers. To date, there is an average 70% vaccination rate among tourism workers.

Jamaica has emerged as a global leader in advancing tourism resilience and sustainability through the successful establishment of the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre, the Resilient Corridor and world-leading COVID-19 health and safety protocols, which have been guideposts to the safe and secure recovery of tourism.

On February 17, 2022 at the World Expo in Dubai, Jamaica will, in partnership with the Global Tourism Entity, launch the first Global Tourism Resilience Day to be observed annually.

Despite the pandemic, there is unprecedented investor interest in hotel and resort development with 8,000 new hotel rooms in varying stages of development and planning.

The long-awaited Tourism Workers Pension Scheme (TWPS) to provide a financial safety net was launched in January 2022 and so far 10,000 workers have registered and the fund has earned $43 million.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

Honourable Members, despite the challenges of the pandemic, annual production of domestic crops grew by 10.4% in 2021 over 2020. This growth is due to continuous recovery activities implemented throughout the year to combat both climate change and COVID-19 impacts.

Exports expanded in FY2021/2022 through increased penetration in new and under-utilised markets. For example, Jamaican pineapples entered the Barbadian market and local soft fruits have easier access to the UK market.

The Government is committed to investing in our farmers and fisherfolk. Under the Production Incentive Programme, over 19,000 farmers were impacted through training and provision of

inputs. In addition, access to water continued to be a critical part of the Programme through rehabilitation and construction of reservoirs and distribution of water irrigation kits.

The Farm Roads Rehabilitation Programme has completed an additional eighteen (18) farm roads valuing $205 million across the island. This Programme has produced a total of 246 roads, over 200 km impacting over 5,000 farmers.

The Agro-Investment Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2021 was passed, repealing the Agricultural Marketing Act and incorporating all its functions under the Agro-Investment Corporation.

For FY2022/23, the legislative agenda includes the following:

1. Repeal of the Plants (Quarantine) Act and enactment of the Plant Health Act; and
2. Amendment to the Agricultural Produce Act.

MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, INVESTMENT AND COMMERCE

Honourable Members, in FY2021/ 22, the Government enacted critical legislation such as the Trademark (Amendment) Act, 2021, The Companies (Amendment) Act, 2021, and the Agricultural Loan Societies & Approved Organizations Regulations, 2021.

> **“Effective March 27, 2022, Jamaica will accede to the Madrid Protocol following the passage of the Trademarks Act in May 2021.**

Effective March 27, 2022, Jamaica will accede to the Madrid Protocol following the passage of the Trademarks Act in May 2021. This will facilitate international registration of trademarks in up to 126 countries through a single application filed with the Jamaica Intellectual Property Office.

As we continue to strengthen our laboratory capacity including for COVID-19 testing, Jamaica National Agency for Accreditation, the only internationally recognised accreditation body in the English-speaking Caribbean, continues to provide the assurance that people seek.

During the FY 2022/2023, the following legislative priorities will be pursued:

1. Amendments to the Companies Act to strengthen the disclosure of information relating to the beneficial ownership of companies in accordance with the Financial Action Task Force standards to counter money laundering and terrorism financing.
2. The Insolvency (Amendment) Bill to allow for the rehabilitation of businesses where possible and the prevention of insolvency.
3. The Dangerous Drugs (Cannabis Import, Export, Transit & Transshipment) Regulations to facilitate the growth of the cannabis industry for medical, therapeutic and scientific purposes by creating a legal framework for import, export, transit and transshipment in the industry.

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY

Honourable Members, investment in science, technology and innovation is essential for economic development and social progress. The Science, Technology and Innovation Policy which will propel productivity and improve industry competitiveness to support faster growth, create jobs and improve health, education, security and governance will be tabled in this Parliamentary year.

On December 1, 2021, the Information Commissioner assumed office under the Data Protection Act, 2020. Additionally, the members of the Data Protection Oversight Committee were appointed for three years with effect from December 1, 2021.

The operationalisation of the Data Protection Act is critical to the implementation of the National Identification System. With the appointment of the Commissioner, the sections of the Act relating to the Office of the Information Commissioner were brought into

force, signalling that full compliance with the legislation will commence on December 1, 2023.

The pandemic has made the roll out of national broadband even more urgent and critical. The Government has been expanding its broadband footprint with the intention to connect over one hundred (100) educational institutions to the Government's Emergency Broadband Network.

"Decarbonisation in the energy sector through the introduction of renewable energy, combined with the electrification of the transportation sector, represent critical drivers to reducing Jamaica's carbon footprint.

This will facilitate faster internet access for teachers and students in schools where there is high demand for bandwidth. Additionally, all Parish Courts and Municipal Corporations will be connected to the network via fibre, thereby improving the communication among these entities and other Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

The Government continues to take actions to redefine the energy and technology landscape and has developed a Strategic Framework to guide the introduction of electric vehicles in Jamaica. An Electric Vehicle Council has been established that will oversee the implementation of the Framework.

Decarbonisation in the energy sector through the introduction of renewable energy, combined with the electrification of the transportation sector, represent critical drivers to reducing Jamaica's carbon footprint.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE

During FY2021/2022, the Government continued to execute a range of policies and activities to further develop and maintain Jamaica's trade and foreign relations, in pursuit of national recovery and development goals.

These efforts were instrumental in acquiring donations valued at more than J$370 million in support of Jamaica's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. The Government continues to leverage its relationships at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels, and with the diaspora, to secure further support.

The Government passed the Authentication (Foreign Public Documents) Act 2020 and implemented the new more cost-effective and simplified process of authenticating public documents intended for use overseas and foreign documents to be used in Jamaica. This will increase our global connectivity and make it easier to do business.

In keeping with the Government's priority to strengthen and expand the global network of Honorary Consuls, three new Consulates in Africa and one in Europe were opened. Seven (7) new Honorary Investment Advisors/Special Envoys were also appointed.

The Government continues to advance the inclusive and sustainable economic growth agenda through the National Foreign Trade Policy and Economic Diplomacy Programme. This includes securing funding for the review and development of a market strategy for the EU coffee market, a new arrangement to expand exports of West Indies Sea Island Cotton and generation of trade and investment leads in several critical areas.

The 60th anniversary of Jamaica's Independence, and of the establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States of America, provide a fitting context for advancing the process of clearing the name of the Rt. Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jamaica's first National Hero.

To that end, the Government will utilise the avenues available, to intercede with the Government of the United States, building on past and existing efforts to lift the stain of his wrongful conviction.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Members, no society can fully bring **Peace, Opportunity and Prosperity** to its people without a good justice system.

The Restorative Justice Programme was able to divert 80% of cases referred to it by the courts and approximately 12,378 persons benefited from sensitisation sessions about the programme.

The Victim Support Division was able to provide face-to-face and virtual counselling sessions, court support and other services to 4,358 victims of crime to help them heal from emotional trauma.

Additionally, the Child Diversion Programme provided access by various health professionals to over 315 children.

From a legislative standpoint, the Judicature (Parish Courts) (Amendment) Act 2021 and the Judicature (Appellate Jurisdiction) (Amendment) Act, 2021 were passed, thereby granting right of appeal to the Prosecution in criminal proceedings in the Parish Court and Supreme Court.

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The Government will continue to promote the use of mediation instead of litigation to resolve disputes, avoid community conflicts and reduce the burden on the court system. At the same time, it will continue to expand justice infrastructure, including its drive to improve access and use of technology.

Accordingly, the Manchester Family Court was completed and handed over to the Judiciary in December 2021, and had its first sitting in January 2022. The St. Ann Family Court, which is practically completed, is being outfitted to be fully equipped with the relevant technology to facilitate remote hearings, and is due

to be handed over to the Judiciary before the end of this fiscal year.

MINISTRY OF LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Honourable Members, with the creation of the Ministry of Legal and Constitutional Affairs, focused attention will be given to the Government's legislative agenda and to legal and constitutional reform.

The creation of this new Ministry may be regarded as the first serious attempt by any Government to holistically revisit the legal and constitutional infrastructure of Jamaica, in 60 years.

It has major tasks to:

1. Reform the laws of Jamaica, and
2. Start the process of reviewing the Constitution, and, the process to shift Jamaica's status as a Constitutional Monarchy.

One critical piece of legislation in need of reform is the Bail Act. New provisions will be enacted in relation to the grant or denial of bail and related matters.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GENDER, ENTERTAINMENT AND SPORT

Honourable Members, the second Government-owned shelter to house victims of Gender-Based Violence has been opened. This shelter will support the first shelter, which has to date hosted 12 families, including 15 children.

The Government supported our Olympians and Paralympians for Tokyo 2020 through the Athletes' Assistance Programme, which provided similar financial support through a monthly stipend totalling approximately $24 million to all 87 athletes who were preparing for the games. This propelled our fantastic athletes to win four gold, one silver and four bronze medals, and we now have the fastest woman alive in the world.

Cabinet has approved the recommended amendments to the Domestic Violence Act and drafting instructions have been issued. The amendments are expected to be passed in Parliament in this Legislative Year.

The implementation of the proposed Entertainment, Culture and Creative Industries Act, is to benefit from technical and funding support under the framework of the "EU/UNESCO Expert Facility on the Governance of Culture in Developing Countries". This will lead to the development, streamlining and safeguarding of our indigenous entertainment, cultural and creative industries.

The Government provided $90 million in grants to approximately 2,000 practitioners as well as organisations in the cultural, creative and entertainment sectors to cushion the devastating impact of the pandemic.

JAMAICA 60 presents us with an opportunity to achieve significant transformation of Jamaica and the spirit of our people through the development of major physical infrastructure projects across a wide spectrum, spanning Sports, Culture, Health, Education, some of which will be completed during the year.

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Jamaica continues to be at the forefront of efforts to promote resilience in the region. In November 2021, we hosted the historic Seventh Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas and the Caribbean. This Regional Platform for the first time held a youth forum, which will be a feature of future platforms.

The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) continued to play a central role in the national COVID-19 response, through its monitoring and assessment of compliance.

The Government continues to equip the fire service to adequately respond to emergencies. The Jamaica Fire Brigade completed the purchase of thirty (30) fire trucks in 2021.

For the fiscal year 2022/2023, the Government will be embarking on the implementation of an integrated rural development programme to modernise rural communities, while improving infrastructure and services. Greater emphasis will be placed on social protection with the expansion of the construction of indigent houses.

> **Greater emphasis will be placed on social protection with the expansion of the construction of indigent houses.**

Legislative priorities for the coming year include: finalising the Human Services Bill, the National Solid Waste (Amendment) Bill, and Regulations related to the National Solid Waste Management Authority and the Building (Enforcement of Notices and Orders) Regulations.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND MINING

The Regulations to accompany the Road Traffic Act were recently tabled in Parliament. They include far-reaching changes to make our roads safer for all and improve public safety and order.

In the upcoming fiscal year, the Government will focus on the full implementation of the new Island Traffic Authority, as a statutory body, mandated to carry out the provisions of the Road Traffic Act 2018. The Authority will continue to implement technological and strategic initiatives to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness.

Additionally, the National Minerals Policy will be repositioned and implemented, to include: establishing the National Minerals Institute and diversification, of the minerals portfolio through the exploitation of non-bauxite mineral resources such as limestone and precious stones.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to highlight the importance of comprehensive programmes that cater to the most vulnerable. During FY2021/22, a Social Pension Programme was introduced targeting persons 75 years and over. To date, approximately 7,000 persons have been registered and another 13,000 persons are being targeted to receive benefits under the Programme.

During the year, the Government benefited from a renewed partnership with the UN World Food Programme. A grant agreement that saw the donation of 10,950 food packages and US$1.5 million to aid in the Government's COVID-19 relief efforts, was signed. Approximately $2 billion was spent to provide additional COVID-19 relief grants to 195,000 families through the SERVE Jamaica programme. Beneficiaries of the Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH), NIS and social pensioners were targeted for assistance.

The special sub-committee of the Labour Advisory Council established in December 2020 to assess the impact of the pandemic on Jamaica's labour market, completed its work in June 2021.

The sub-committee cited immediate steps for recovery that included: embracing digitisation and retooling, as well as, legislative actions to address the new demands of the world of work. The implementation of unemployment insurance is among the key recommendations, and work on its feasibility will be advanced in the upcoming year.

The implementation of a series of reform measures that began in 2018, has resulted in a net surplus in the National Insurance Fund's operations and an overall improvement in its long-term sustainability. As at November 2021, the unaudited Net Asset Value of the National Insurance Fund stood at approximately $136 billion representing a year over year growth rate of approximately 12 per cent.

CONCLUSION

Honourable Members, the Government remains focused on building our Jamaica, a place of **Peace, Opportunity and Prosperity**.

The Jamaica we all want, the Jamaica we all deserve!

A Jamaica where we have equitable access to quality education and training.

A Jamaica where we have efficient and reliable infrastructure and services.

A Jamaica where we have access to timely and quality healthcare.

A Jamaica where our unique environmental and cultural assets are preserved.

A Jamaica where entrepreneurial and creative talents thrive.

A Jamaica where we are safe and secure.

A Jamaica where people consider us the destination of choice.

A Jamaica where all citizens are positive contributors to our society and love, nurture, protect and support each other.

We are empowering our people, securing their **Peace**, providing them with **Opportunities** and investing in their **Prosperity**.

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