

Keynote Speech

Five Years of Action in Implementing the SDGs

COVID-19 and Beyond: Perspectives from Jamaica's experience in integrating the SDGs in the implementation of Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan, 2015–2020

Wayne Henry, PhD, JP

Director General, Planning Institute of Jamaica

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Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Good Morning.

Today, I will speak on the topic “COVID-19 and Beyond: *Perspectives from Jamaica's experience in integrating the SDGs in the implementation of Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan*. I will be examining areas of progress, strengths and gaps and share early insights on the way forward.

Jamaica's motto is “Out of Many One People.” This is representative of an approach to nation building that advances integration, equity and inclusion as core principles in advancing a vision for not only Jamaicans, but one that connects us with our regional and global communities—and which culminated in the development and launch of the 21-year Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan (NDP), in 2009; Jamaica's first long-term national development plan.

Vision 2030 Jamaica provides a road map and governance and institutional framework for the achievement of developed country status / a secure and prosperous future and the realization of a vision: “Jamaica, the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business.” It is geared towards the achievement of four synergistic and interdependent sustainable development goals which cascade into 15 National Outcomes.

The Road Map for SDG Implementation in Jamaica, which was approved by Cabinet in 2017, identifies Vision 2030 Jamaica and the Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF) — the main mechanism for policy-based implementation of the long term strategies of Vision 2030 Jamaica — as providing the framework and mechanisms for advancing the achievement of the SDGs. The Road Map was informed by stakeholder consultations and a Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA), in 2016, that determined Vision 2030 Jamaica and the SDGs to be 91.0 per cent aligned. Of note, Jamaica determined that based on efforts to address gaps in alignment, estimates show the country to have exceeded 99.0 per cent alignment in 2018.

In the MTF, the SDGs have been aligned with the goals and outcomes of Vision 2030 Jamaica and targets of the SDGs have been aligned with the medium-term strategic priorities. Jamaica’s first Voluntary National Review Report (2018) comprised a report on action and performance based on this alignment of the SDGs with Vision 2030 Jamaica and integration in Plan implementation.

In alignment with the implementation framework of Vision 2030 Jamaica, the Road Map for SDG Implementation prioritizes coordination, institutional arrangements and partnerships; capacity building in planning, monitoring and evaluation, data and statistics, development financing and other resourcing; and communications and advocacy; and states that implementation of Vision 2030 Jamaica can lead to the achievement of the SDGs. It presents recommendations towards supporting the enablement of existing strategies and programmes to be integrated in policy bundles and serve as entry points that have accelerative effects.

Prior to the onset of the novel coronavirus “COVID-19” pandemic, Jamaica in its pursuit of Vision 2030 Jamaica had experienced mixed results over the first 11 years of Plan implementation, with performance steadily advancing in some areas while slipping or remaining the same in others—gains were made in human capital development, macro-economic stability, and governance, among other areas; while challenges were experienced in such as areas as security and safety, environmental sustainability and the rate of non-communicable diseases.

The country recorded positive performance on key international governance indicators such as voice and accountability and government effectiveness and was ranked 6 of 180 countries in the 2020 World Press Freedom Index; and the case clearance rate increased owing to targeted

efforts to improve access to court and other justice services. Continued focus was given to advancing women's empowerment and gender equality within the framework of the National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE, 2011) and alignment with the Beijing Platform. Communication and Reporting on Plan Implementation and performance have been geared towards maximum reach and ease of access.

Based on lessons learned, Jamaica has engaged systems and practices for improved coordination of the implementation of Vision 2030 Jamaica and the SDGs towards improved development outcomes. These include:

- full alignment of MTF 2018–2021 with relevant SDGs and targets
- strengthening the capacity of the Vision 2030 Jamaica Secretariat for coordination, and monitoring and evaluation regarding the integration of the SDGs in Plan Implementation and the capacity of the SDGs Secretariat for coordination of SDG implementation
- establishing a two-tiered stakeholder-driven governance mechanism—a Core Group and National Oversight Committee; integrating the SDGs in partnership frameworks and institutional arrangements
- strengthening national capacity to report on the SDG Indicators
- strengthening capacity for sustainable and adequate development financing, including, innovative financing
- developing the systems and structures for a digital society and technology enablement.

COVID-19 has demonstrated how quickly a development path can be challenged. From the PIOJ's preliminary review of the development targets under Vision 2030 Jamaica, it is anticipated that based on projections for the Jamaican and wider global society and economy, as well as on-going national demand for social assistance, economic stimulus and worker protection interventions, there will be slippages in several development indicators.

COVID-19 has already been demonstrated to have deleterious effects on lives and livelihoods with an estimated economic contraction of 10.0 per cent for the fiscal year; increases in the experience of different types of vulnerabilities for the majority of the population and for particularly those traditionally most at risk; and requiring Jamaica, like the rest of the global community, to balance public health and economic survivability concerns.

Within this context, the significance of national development policy and planning as prerequisites for mitigating losses and damages and seizing opportunities for stability and growth, has been highlighted. The role of government and the importance of public policy have been elevated as critical success factors in governing markets, including informing the relationships and linkages within and among the financial and real sectors as well as the protection of a country's economic capital and investments—such as its entrepreneurs, workers and national and global value chains. The necessity for agility and adhering to strategic priorities in not only programming but in the means of implementation is critical to the pursuit of stakeholder/partnership driven development within a context where private and public interests may simultaneously intersect and conflict.

We see this in our own country response where government has had to extend its direct management and intervention beyond traditional areas such as macro-economic and fiscal management, public health, education and environmental management; to economic value chains, including financial and technical interventions in both supply and demand logistics; and income security within a pay-check protection framework to both the formal and informal sectors; among others. Yet, the importance of public-private and other partnerships, and the role of civil society and non-governmental actors, has been demonstrably critical to ensuring that the necessary capital, expertise and ownership as well as local level and needs-based reach and translation of policies and programmes is achieved. This reality, coupled with the reigniting of debates—on the implications of globalization and technological advancement on the future of work; sustainability, equity and resilience within global value chains; and climate change—particularly on small island developing states (SIDS), have signalled possible enduring shifts in the global development landscape post COVID-19.

Jamaica's commitment to Vision 2030 Jamaica and the SDGs provides a framework for response to crises such as COVID-19—the relevance of our long-term goals and overarching strategic framework for development has been reinforced, but strategic actions in the medium to long term to realize our goals and maintain that path, require strategic review and revision, including revisiting our development targets up to 2030 and the period/schedule for achieving planned outcomes and our national development goals.

COVID-19 has created and exposed cracks in global systems and structures which pose threats and present opportunities for change and growth. Jamaica has been responding to the

recognized critical importance of ensuring that Vision 2030 Jamaica and SDG aligned policies regarding human capital development and social protection are integrated in shifting economic and business practices and social responsibility efforts. This approach seeks to ensure that post COVID-19 societal shifts do not result in slippage or deviations away from the pursuit of development that is multi-dimensionally sustainable and inclusive. Jamaica is committed to moving beyond business as usual and embracing a “new normal” that “leaves no one behind”.

Thank you.