

# Tacking Resilience: Lessons Learned and Best Practices in the Jamaican Development Context

Thank you Chair.

Today, Jamaica continues to face many challenges – ranging from economic, social and national security challenges, pressures on its natural environment, and the increasing impacts of global climate change. Notwithstanding, Jamaica continues to see many development gains in several areas such as:

- Human capital development
- Macroeconomic stability
- Reduction in unemployment
- Increases in the use of non-fossil fuel based energy such as alternatives and renewables
- Governance particularly in control and corruption and government effectiveness
- Key economic industries particularly tourism and agriculture
- Infrastructural development

There continues to be consensus by stakeholders on the need to undertake fundamental reforms to consolidate our macroeconomic gains over the years, improve our international competitiveness, undertake holistic development in our most volatile and at-risk communities, protect the most vulnerable groups in our society, and strengthen the resilience of our built and natural environments, including recognizing the impacts of a changing climate and how we respond.

At the very core of Jamaica's development planning is our Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan which articulates 7 guiding principles, one of which is the need for the integration of social, economic and environmental issues towards delivering a high quality of life for all Jamaicans.

**But how are we addressing these developmental issues?**

Let me first share with you a little on Jamaica's national planning framework – Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan as well as the alignment of this national development plan with Agenda 2030

Vision 2030 Jamaica is our country's first long term national development plan designed to place Jamaica in a position to achieve developed country status by 2030. Essentially what this really means is that through this Plan and the strategies and actions to be implemented, Jamaica is positioning itself to transform from a middle income developing country to one which:

- Affords our citizens a high quality of life and world-class standards in critical areas such as education, health-care, access to environmental goods and services
- Integrates and balances economic, social and environmental issues and is underpinned by good governance
- Meets the needs of our present citizens without compromising the ability of future generations (including our children) to meet their own needs
- Equitably includes everyone as participants and beneficiaries of development – where 'no one is left behind'

Vision 2030 Jamaica therefore introduces a new paradigm, which since its promulgation has continued to redefine the strategic direction for Jamaica – one which puts us on a different path – a path to sustainable prosperity – one that moves us from dependence on the lower forms of capital to developing and sustaining the higher forms of capital – our cultural, human, knowledge and institutional capital stocks to move us into the higher stages of development but also position us to add value to the lower forms of capital... moving us into an innovation-driven stage of development. Whilst exploiting the lower forms of capital, for example, our natural resources for tourism, bauxite, agriculture among others, provides the foundation for development, it is the higher forms of capital that will enable us to create the levels of prosperity required for sustained economic and social development. We also know that achieving developed country status by 2030 will require the sustainable management and use of our environmental and natural resources.

Today we see Vision 2030 Jamaica as relevant as it was when it was promulgated in May 2009. Ten years into implementation. I think we can safely say that many of our national goals and national outcomes as contained in the Plan are what we still want to see – hopefully before 2030 – it is true that we want a healthy and stable population; and we do want to have world class education and training; as we want security and safety; good governance; a stable marcoeconomy, an enabling business environment and internationally competitive industry

structures (agriculture, manufacturing, mining among others) as much as we want a healthy natural environment.

Let me turn now to issues related to resilience and present to you some areas that we are exploring with respect to reducing vulnerabilities and advancing sustainable development and ultimately in achieving the Jamaica we want by 2030.

Jamaica's location, geology and geography, is prone to several natural hazards. The country faces a range of primary natural hazard risks, particularly earthquake and tropical cyclone (hurricane) risks, as well as excess rainfall risks. The country also faces secondary risks from flooding and landslides, storm surge and wave impacts, and drought. These hazards, when combined with situations of high vulnerability (rapid urbanization, unplanned settlements etc.), usually result in disasters of varying severity.

Hurricanes, tropical storms and depressions, and floods over the last 15 years (2000 – 2015) have cost the country more than \$4 billion – resulting in significant impacts on economic activities, physical and social infrastructure, property, human welfare and natural resources. So whilst improvements in disaster management have led to reductions in mortality, disaster risks in general have not been significantly reduced, resulting in economic losses from various events. Notwithstanding, our vulnerability to these hazards remain high as Jamaica like other small island developing states has a relatively long coastline and a huge concentration of economic activity in coastal zones, due primarily to the high and growing economic importance of tourism (predominantly coast-based) and the high concentration of the population on the coast. A little over 60 per cent of our population lives within 5km of the coastline. Another main economic engine is agriculture, which also is highly vulnerable to hydrometeorological hazards.

Climate change is adding to the already severe and steadily worsening risk exposure of countries such as Jamaica.

Vision 2030 Jamaica recognizes the role that hazard risk reduction can play in achieving sustainable prosperity for this country and proposes to 'disaster-proof' development by: ...“transforming 'vicious spirals' of risk accumulation and disaster losses into 'virtuous spirals' of development, risk reduction and effective disaster response”. Over the years, Jamaica has invested in, and implemented a range of risk mitigation strategies, projects and programmes in an attempt to prepare for natural hazards and reduce the impacts that these hazards bring. Some of these have included:

- Development of multi-hazard mapping and risk assessments in several communities across the island
- Implementation of the aspects of the Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Programme
- Development of national resettlement guidelines

- Components of the pilot programme for climate resilience
- Building capacity in post disaster needs assessment
- A range of climate change projects and initiatives

Our national development plan, Vision 2030 Jamaica continues to postulate the need for a strong relationship between environmental sustainability and economic growth and stresses that pitting economic growth against environmental sustainability is a false dichotomy – and are key lesson that we have learned and continue to learn. The Plan recognizes the role that environmental sustainability must play in advancing Jamaica’s economic growth prospects as well as reducing vulnerabilities and in achieving developed country status.

I also would like to focus on some areas related to disaster risk management and making us more resilient. The National Development Plan proposes a range of strategies that the country will pursue in the medium term. Strategies to be pursued include:

- Modernizing the legal framework related to disaster risk reduction
- Introducing risk transfer as part of the DRM framework and developing a Public Financial Management Policy for Natural Disaster Risk - This will developed to improve understanding of fiscal risks of natural disasters, and recommend appropriate public financial management for natural disaster risk including the implementation of various financing strategies.
- Using predictive tools for modelling, hazard data mapping and risk assessment
- Adopting a community-based approach to hazard risk reduction
- Expanding early warning systems to reduce the risk of hazards
- Incorporating hazard risk reduction in environmental and natural resources management
- Establishing mechanisms for enhancing the resilience of the poor and most vulnerable
- Establishing measures to incorporate hazard risk reduction in land-use practices and human settlements
- Creating opportunities for private sector involvement in hazard risk reduction, including business contingency planning
- Developing measures to adapt to climate change such as those related to ‘climate proofing’ all national policies and plans; identifying strategic priorities for adaptation to climate change; and, undertake research to identify sector-specific strategies for adaptation

But we also need to benefit from the opportunities that the natural environment and environmental sustainability can provide towards enhancing our resilience and advancing prosperity and inclusiveness for all. These include:

- Determining the economic value of our ecosystems and we also need to know the cost associated with losing these ecosystems – this must be a priority going forward – really determining the total economic value of the ecosystems in our marine environment – this would allow us to make much better economic and social decisions related to our development pathway whilst at the same time protecting our natural resources. It is oftentimes particularly easy to determine the direct use values of coral reefs such as the value of fish stocks – but indirect use values such as the value of genetic resources or the physical protection that reefs provide to the shoreline are much harder to value – but are so important - In other words, can the genetic resources on our reefs be the answer to or cure for breast cancer or prostate cancer
- Restoring degraded ecosystems and recognizing the values of these to socio economic development
- Making greater use of economic instruments for environmental management as a means guiding behaviour towards environmentally responsible activity – of consumers, businesses and even the public sector - and away from undesirable actions through economic incentives and disincentives
- We also need to on a regular basis have up to date data on the state of ecosystems to be able to guide us to make better decisions on their use. I am pleased that this year NPEA will prepare an up to date State of the Environment Report.
- Waste management must be a priority and we must begin to not only reduce but as far as possible eliminate land based sources of pollution from all sectors – moving towards zero waste, close loop manufacturing, use of cleaner technologies etc- and also engage in activities that are geared towards beating plastic pollution. To this end, we applaud the recent bans on single use plastics and the introduction of a deposit refund scheme as we play our part in “beating plastic pollution”.
- Greater use of strategic environmental assessments in decision making as an important step towards effective policy formulation which will result in a more proactive cross-sectoral approach where environmental considerations are integrated into all policy areas.
- Increasing awareness of the general public to the importance of the environment as well as infusing in the curriculum at all levels the interconnectedness of the blue and green and circular economies.
- Engaging in sustainable livelihoods in farming and fishing communities among others –  
And

Last but not least, we need to conceptualize our rural areas as drivers for growth and as such, the National Development Plan proposes to create economically viable and socially stable rural areas where there is universal access to social amenities, a system of governance which fosters the active participation of local communities, and where

opportunities are created so that there can be greater contribution to growth and development of the nation, while ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources and protection of the natural environment. Importantly, areas of emphasis under this national strategy include: promoting investment in services and infrastructure; building effective, integrated and participatory approaches for rural development; supporting development of human and social capital in rural areas; and fostering attention on eradicating poverty and promoting social inclusion in rural areas

I take this opportunity to applaud the JA Reeach project that is helping us on this pathway to sustainable development. We applaud your efforts working with young people, in communities across Jamaica in ecosystems management, sustainable agriculture initiatives, sustainable livelihoods and climate change adaptation ... helping us along the way to build on best practices, registering lessons learned for scaling up and helping us all to create the Jamaica we want by 2030.

Your work across Jamaica shows that you recognize the importance and the advantages of a sustainable pathway to development where we must all work towards eliminating poverty, creating sustainable economic growth, social inclusion, a healthy natural environment, enhancing resilience and where our developmental pathway 'leaves no one behind'.