

Speech 1: Infusing Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Building Back Better

To be delivered by:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

(4 minutes)

Continuity

In this our 60th year of independence, even in the face of COVID-19, Jamaica has re-ignited our commitment to national development through people-centred Government policy and planning.

Our National Development Plan – Vision 2030 Jamaica is 98 per cent aligned with the SDGs and strongly reflects the commitment of the Government of Jamaica to advancing the SDGS.

Progress

Over the last decade, Jamaica undertook a transformative Economic Reform Programme. We exercised strong fiscal discipline, entrenched macro-economic stability, reformed the business environment, and increased capital expenditure as well as social spending. These efforts improved the ease of doing business, laid the foundation for growth and competitiveness, and reduced the prevalence of poverty, including extreme and child poverty. We also sought to leverage cultural, knowledge, and human capital through development of the knowledge and orange economies.

Furthermore, since our first VNR in 2018, we have: expanded our protected marine and coastal areas beyond the global 2020 target; increased forest protection; updated our NDCs; and worked to harness the potential of the blue and green economies. Still, more is needed to prevent biodiversity loss and strengthen environmental protection.

Mr President

COVID-19 Impact

Jamaica's debt to GDP ratio, growth and employment indicators were all negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Youth and women, as elsewhere, were disproportionately affected.

Additionally, the need to deliver goods and services remotely, met upon the reality of our pre-existing digital divide. Transitioning from in-person modalities, deeply affected rural communities, the poor and vulnerable.

Domestic-Led Recovery – COVID-19

Despite the challenges, the dividends of the Economic Reform Programme cushioned the more harmful impacts of the pandemic. The Government was therefore able to respond directly to the fallout in healthcare, education, and the labour market through an unprecedented support programme valued at US\$418.9 million. It comprised cash transfers to the unemployed; compassionate grants to the informally employed; elderly and students; support for tourism businesses; small business grants; and student loan relief.

Mr President

Means of Implementation

Domestic Financing

Regarding Means of Implementation, Jamaica has advanced financial inclusion through improved access to affordable financing by MSMEs, greater participation in the formal banking system and the establishment of a Social Stock Exchange.

Challenges continue to limit public investment for accelerated growth. For example, a financing gap of US\$11.9 billion has been identified by the Inter-American Development Bank with respect to water, sanitation, telecommunications, and energy infrastructure. Annual debt servicing places further constraints on fiscal capacity for spending on social protection and the environment.

Jamaica has been placing greater focus on economic independence, including better utilisation of domestic sources to finance our development objectives. Notwithstanding, we continue to encourage partnership and investment, and therefore highlight for the international community, our advancements in macroeconomic stability, good governance and transparency in public finances.

Mr President

ODA

Access to and eligibility for grant and concessional financing remain important for Jamaica's recovery. The international financial architecture must be aligned with the SDGs, if SIDS and Highly Indebted Middle Income countries are to have any hope for a sustainable future.

Technical assistance and exchanges are also required in areas such as human capital development, digitalisation, disaster risk reduction, and food security. Jamaica will continue to promote greater South–South and triangular cooperation in these and other areas.

Mr President

Trade

As a small open economy, which requires trade to grow, Jamaica is prioritizing competitiveness of local industry, to increase our share of global trade and promote upward movement within value chains.

Our global competitiveness is constrained by high-energy costs and heavy reliance on imported inputs, both exacerbated by global inflationary pressures.

Against this background, we encourage:

- Accelerated sustainable energy transition
- Strengthened linkages across productive sectors
- Promotion of local innovation through strengthened protection of intellectual property rights; and
- Increased knowledge transfer to and investments in research and development (R&D) within developing countries.

Mr President

Jamaica will leverage our experience in long-term development planning, economic and social reforms, and crisis response. We will continue to advocate for appropriate recognition of vulnerability and improved access to concessional financing for SIDS and middle-income countries.

Speech 2: Recovery in the Context of Long-Term Development Planning

To be delivered by:

Dr Wayne Henry, Director General, Planning Institute of Jamaica

(3 minutes)

Context

I thank the Minister for her opening remarks and exposition of Jamaica's implementation of the SDGs.

Jamaica has demonstrated the importance of strengthening the Means of Implementation towards accelerating localization, participatory development and progress towards the SDGs. Our adoption of long-term national development planning enables responsiveness to shocks and promotes recovery in full commitment to achieving the priorities of Vision 2030 Jamaica and the SDGs. This has included strengthening the implementation framework, with new and updated mechanisms and tools for results-based planning, implementation, and M&E towards accelerated social transformation.

Recovery Guided by the Means of Implementation

Jamaica has leveraged its participatory approach to development, to include the cross-section of **stakeholders** in social contracts, to advance sustainable prosperity for all. This goal will be bolstered by the development of multi-dimensional vulnerability and poverty indices, which will be utilized to strengthen our response to the factors contributing to vulnerability.

We have enhanced the inclusiveness of our justice, health, financial and educational systems, through technology enablement and digitalization; **improved statistical systems**; and strengthened mechanisms for standards, quality assurance and accountability.

Development Planning and the Way Forward

This VNR has demonstrated that there is need for improvement in governance, stronger institutions, capacity building and financing to achieve the priorities for each goal. It has also identified opportunities for further evaluation of our development trajectory, as well as potential avenues to strengthen Jamaica's capacity to implement the SDGs.

Further diversification and strengthening of the domestic market, will be supported by strategies to expand the use of renewable energy, lowering input costs for production, and **upgrading and building** physical assets. Underpinning these advancements is the application of technology to improve factor productivity, through public and private **research and development** initiatives.

While we have made gains through legislation to protect our environmental assets, there is need for further sensitisation on sustainable **consumption and production** that accelerate attainment of the emission reduction targets.

We stand committed to the universal values that guide our development, and pledge to leave no one behind.

Closing Statements

To be delivered by:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

(1 minute)

The VNR process has underscored the need for Jamaica to address the emerging challenges of declining population growth, high inflation and global instability, as well as the systemic and structural issues of high debt, insufficient economic sector diversification, climate change, low productivity and innovation. These are impediments to our growth and development. Solutions will require the commitment of all stakeholders.

Jamaica stands ready to action the SDGs as we re-ignite our nation — to deliver an inclusive, resilient, and green recovery that ensures a broad and lasting rise in prosperity, leaving no one behind. Jamaica, the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business, remains our vision.