

Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development
Statement delivered at the High Level Political Forum 2022

Acting at the Local Level

July 6, 2022

Thank you, Moderator,

Excellences, delegates,

The Local Authorities in Jamaica have grasped the understanding that to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the local level, inclusiveness, accountability, human and financial resources are required. Public participation and collective action by local stakeholders have long been recognized as key determining factors in achieving sustainable development. Section 21 of the Local Governance Act (2016), Jamaica provides the blueprint for the actualization and localization of the SDGs. It is the very foundation upon which community participation, local action provision and access to services are realized. Strengthening local action to achieve the SDGs will require more sensitization and public education of community persons to ensure full buy-in into the SDGs implementation process. As local authorities, we interface with communities on a day-to-day basis and as such, greater fiscal, financial or administrative autonomy would contribute to greater efficiency and effectiveness in delivering services, which directly and indirectly contribute to the outcomes and goals of sustainable development. Jamaica has adopted innovative approaches to raise awareness on the SDGs at the local level through cross-scale cooperation and participatory planning, using tools such as community needs analysis, community visioning, and round table discussions.

The Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary National Review (VNR) inform and strengthen each other as they raise public awareness, timing and outcomes, and offer public administrations a cognitive tool to break down silos and facilitate dialogue. Local government is close to the people and the VLRs could bolster the response to COVID-19 by prioritizing and responding to the needs of citizens particularly the most vulnerable amongst us.

Challenges will arise in the effective implementation of the SDGs at the local level and include limited knowledge of SDG initiatives and capacity to support planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

To negate implementation challenges there is need to ensure that:

- cities, local authorities, and communities are empowered and equipped to implement the SDGs
- capacity building strategies targeting local government staff, and communities are incorporated/included in corporate and strategic plans and local economic development initiatives.

In closing, advancing the localization of the SDGs and improving the alignment with national goals and strengthening our responses to internal and external shocks will require collective effort as we continue building back better and stronger.

THANK YOU