



THRONE SPEECH

DELIVERED BY:
HIS EXCELLENCY THE MOST HONOURABLE
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GOVERNOR-GENERAL

CONTINUING ON THE PATH TO PROSPERITY

THURSDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2018

GORDON HOUSE
KINGSTON, JAMAICA

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Honourable Members,

We are thankful that all branches of the State can gather in this collegial fashion to hear and be guided by the legislative agenda, policies, programmes and general direction set by the Administration to secure the prosperity of the people.

We once again recommit ourselves to work complementarily and earnestly to achieve the set objectives in true and faithful service to the people.

Through a united effort, as one nation, one people, one family we can nurture the germinating seeds of our success, our prosperity.

Organised crime and the resulting violence and homicide it produces, is the biggest threat to citizens' security and continues to stymie the growth and prosperity of our country. Jamaicans are saying enough is enough. This

The political directorate is prepared to unite against the criminals who have caused too much hurt, too much pain and too many tears.

Administration has shown that it is prepared to take the tough and resolute measures needed to tackle the crime monster and there are signs that a coalition is being developed, across all sectors throughout the island, to address this issue which is caused by only a minority of Jamaicans.

When **Members of this Honourable House**, voted together to approve the extension of the State of Public Emergency in St. James, it sent a signal that the political directorate is prepared to unite against the criminals who have caused too much hurt, too much pain and too many tears over the past many, many years.

For this year, the Administration is committed to providing additional resources and support to the anti-crime fight. The

justice system will also be given special attention while the social interventions targeting unattached youths will continue in earnest.

Honourable Members, this fight against crime is one that we all must be a part of, it is one that we cannot afford to lose and one that every Jamaican who wants to see a brighter day, must be encouraged to join. In order to achieve the Jamaica we want, all branches of the State, the whole of Government, all Ministries, Departments and Agencies must understand their critical role and its intersection and interconnection with other functions to create a seamlessly integrated machinery that can overcome any challenge and ultimately secure the prosperity of the Jamaican people.

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

The National Identification System (NIDS)

Honourable Members, ensuring that every citizen of Jamaica can be identified and known to the State so that their rights and entitlements can be preserved and planned for in advance is necessary for the country to continue on the path to prosperity.

The National Identification System (NIDS) will provide a comprehensive and secure structure to capture and store personal identity information of individuals. NIDS will become the primary source for identity verification and will improve governance and management in the delivery of security services, social benefits and economic programmes.

This year, the planned National Identification and Registration Authority Regulations will be developed and tabled in the House by September 2018.

Other initiatives for this year include:

- 1) The acquisition of a National Identification System to meet the business needs of the Government of Jamaica and the private sector which will satisfy, in particular, the 'Know Your Customer' requirements of the financial sector;

- 2) The continuation of the digitisation of the records of the Registrar General's Department;
- 3) The development of processes to link the records of births and deaths to prevent identity theft;
- 4) The commencement of the transformation of the RGD into the National Identification and Registration Authority; and
- 5) The establishment of a National Address Database, indicating where all parcels of land are located within the island in order to support the enrolment of persons in the NIDS.

Youth Employment in the Digital and Animation Industries (YEDAI)/Housing, Opportunity, Production, Employment (HOPE) Project

Honourable Members, the country welcomes the first signs of prosperity as reported in our job creation figures generally, and specifically for our young people. Youth unemployment fell by 7% from October

The virtual economy presents a unique and attractive opportunity for creative young Jamaicans, to access employment opportunities globally.

2016 to October 2017. Notwithstanding, this Administration remains very concerned about the levels of unemployment among women and youths, despite the last fiscal year recording the lowest level of unemployment over the past 10 years.

The virtual economy presents a unique and attractive opportunity for creative young Jamaicans to access employment opportunities globally, while residing locally. Jamaica is particularly well poised to take advantage of this opportunity due to our geographical and cultural proximity to the outsourcing markets of the western hemisphere.

The Administration has tested the model of engaging unattached youth in a programme of learning, earning, giving back to country through service, and saving while working (LEGS). This year the Government will seek to scale up these programmes and make them available to more unattached youth.

Public Sector Transformation Implementation

The transformation of the public sector will continue this year with 18 public bodies slated to be rationalised. The creation of a central database of all Government employees is also to be done to allow for evidence-based decisions.

MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE

Honourable Members, the Government has been steadfastly implementing its economic programme for the Government's continued reform agenda. The benefits of credible economic policies are evidenced by the macroeconomic

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stability, low inflation, strong international reserves and lower current account deficits. Macroeconomic stability has been supported by strong fiscal discipline which has delivered the requisite primary surpluses to put public debt on a firm downward trajectory.

The priority policies of the Government continue to be geared towards:

- Enabling growth and national development through a sound and predictable macroeconomic policy framework that maintains low inflation, a stable exchange rate and competitive interest rates;
- Improving revenue administration by creating a simple, equitable and competitive tax environment to enhance growth and ensure greater compliance;

- Strengthening the level of financial accountability and efficiency of the public sector;
- Strengthening the capacity of the Government to effectively regulate financial institutions, Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), and combat financial crimes; and
- Improving the internal efficiency and effectiveness of the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service.

The Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA) will continue to drive economic growth through trade facilitation, revenue collection and border protection. This year the Agency will improve the rate of detection of contraband, prohibited and 'uncustomed' goods through the procurement of more cargo imaging scanners to be deployed more widely at various ports of entry. To enhance revenues and trade the JCA will intensify the implementation of its Trade Facilitation Programme, further simplifying, harmonising, standardising and automating as necessary, its rules, procedures and processes, particularly in the area of technology and the ASYCUDA World system to improve service delivery and reliability.

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Honourable Members, this year the Administration will be seeking your approval for a number of legislative measures designed to improve crime fighting efforts and better enable law enforcement agencies to interdict criminals. These include:

1. **Police Service Act**

This Act will replace the Constabulary Force Act and provide for the modernisation and transformation of the Jamaica Constabulary Force into a modern intelligence-led police service that ensures citizen security, with stronger systems of administration, management and internal discipline.

2. **Merger of the Police Services Commission and the Police Civilian Oversight Authority**

This will require amendments to the Constitution that relate to the Police Services Commission.

3. Firearms (Amendment) Act

This Bill will seek to amend the primary legislation by making provisions relating to the following:

- a. The establishment of criminal offences pertaining to the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms in keeping with Jamaica's international obligations;
- b. Effective control and security measures, including the disposal of firearms, in order to prevent theft and diversion to usage in criminal activities; and
- c. Ensuring that the revised Firearms Act is compatible with international standards and obligations of the Government of Jamaica.

4. Finger Prints (Amendment) Act

Amendments to the Finger Prints Act will seek to strengthen the forensic investigative powers and capacity of law enforcement agencies. One of the proposed amendments includes a provision to allow the taking of finger prints from objects left in public spaces.

5. The Proceeds of Crime (Amendment) Act (POCA)

The main purpose of the amendments to POCA is to ensure compliance with the recommendations emanating from the Caribbean Financial Action Taskforce Mutual Evaluation of Jamaica, conducted in 2016; as well as to update the Act for greater effectiveness. Regulations will also be developed for the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme (ARIS) to guide the use of the funds recovered for national development.

6. Criminal Justice (Suppression of Criminal Organizations) Act

This law will be reviewed in accordance with legislative requirements to review same within three years of its enactment.

7. The Parole (Amendment) Act

The amendments to the Parole Act will seek to update, modernise and strengthen the legislation to bring it in line with current trends, international standards and best practices.

8. Amendments to the Immigration Restriction (Commonwealth Citizens) Act; Aliens Act; and the attendant Regulations

The proposed amendments seek to focus on stricter penalties giving the immigration officer more robust authority; and the use of an automated Border Control System, among other things.

9. The Corrections (Amendment) Act

Amendments to the Corrections Act will seek to update and strengthen the law and make it more aligned to current trends. The provisions will include, inter alia, provisions for a new definition of communication that takes into consideration modern technological advances and increases in existing penalties for breaches.

10. The Justice Protection (Amendment) Bill

Amendments to the legislation will seek to provide for greater protection of witnesses. The amendments will also strengthen the Government's capabilities and effectiveness for the provision of services to protect witnesses.

In addition to the legislative measures, the Government will continue to focus on strengthening its administrative and technological capabilities, crime prevention and community safety measures and rehabilitation and redemption.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

As we seek to make our nation more secure and promote the respect for the rule of law, we must also strengthen our justice system. **Honourable Members**, the Administration has already indicated that the Legislative and Constitutional Reform Programme is among the seven priority programmes and projects set out in the Ministry of Justice's Strategic Business Plan 2018 - 2021 and Operational Plan 2018/19.

The legislative agenda will include:

- **Authentication (Foreign Public Documents) Bill 2017** - This allows for Jamaica to accede to the United Nations

Convention that will allow public documents from Jamaica to be accepted in other countries.

- **Statutory Review of the Sexual Offences Act** - As required by law every four years.
- **Constitution (Amendment) (Appointment of Additional Judges) Act, 2017 and Judicature (Parish Courts) (Amendment) Act, 2017** - To amend the Constitution to enable the retention of retired judges on a fixed term basis.
- **Judicature (Resident Magistrates) (Amendment), Bill and Judicature (Appellate Jurisdiction) (Amendment)** - To allow the prosecution to have a limited right of appeal.

The Administration's programme will contribute to the achievement of a modernised justice system that Jamaicans deserve, starting with reducing the backlog of indictments and summary matters in the Parish Courts, improving the delivery of justice services in eight additional parishes through Justice Centres by 2019 and establishing the single anti-corruption agency.

The Justice Ministry will also work with the courts and the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service to increase the number of staff in the courts to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

The focus will continue to be on creating a healthier Jamaica... and investments in critical health infrastructure.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Honourable Members, as we seek to protect, preserve and promote life, we must secure our health by actively promoting a healthy lifestyle. In this fiscal year, the focus will continue to be on creating a healthier Jamaica and programmes to rehabilitate and make new investments in critical health infrastructure will continue. Productivity of all sectors hinges on the health and well-being of our people and while focusing on prevention we must also continue to expand access and improve the quality of care to optimise the quality of life of all Jamaicans.

Programmes will include:

- The completion of the pre-investment works and ground breaking for the construction of a **Child and Adolescent Hospital in Western Jamaica**;
- **Phase 2 of the Cornwall Regional Hospital Rehabilitation project**, which includes significant work on the ventilation system, will also be completed;
- Increased use of technology, partnerships and improved processes to enhance client satisfaction;
- Continuing to place priority on the promotion of a healthy and active lifestyle, as a means of countering the ongoing epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through the **Jamaica Moves** campaign. This was launched with much success as the Government's signature health promotion intervention last year, with emphasis on increased physical activity, healthy eating and regular health checks.

MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOB CREATION

The focus of the Government continues to be on creating a modern and efficient ecosystem that provides the foundation for economic growth and job creation. The Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation's portfolio areas are symbiotically aligned to drive economic growth in a sustainable manner. **Honourable Members**, let me highlight some key initiatives.

Housing

The strategic review of the National Housing Trust was completed in November 2017. The review will be brought to Parliament in the first quarter of this fiscal year for discussions and implementation of accepted recommendations within the context of our Vision 2030 goals should begin soon thereafter.

During 2017/18, directives were given to the NHT to further increase construction activities. I can announce here today that this was achieved. The spinoff effect has resulted in the Trust being on target to achieve 5,500 housing starts for fiscal year 2017/18.

Also, beginning July 2017, the NHT implemented several policy changes and initiatives geared at improving housing accessibility and affordability. Chief among them were:

- The implementation of a partnership between the Trust and credit unions that will provide persons earning less than \$30,000 per week with housing-related funding of up to \$1.5 million;
- Providing 100% financing to qualified applicants to acquire NHT scheme solutions;
- Increasing the amount accessible to qualified persons through the NHT Home Grants programme to \$2.5 million (up from \$1.5 million).

In addition to those key adjustments, there was a realignment of the four interest rate bands in which NHT contributors are categorised.

For 2018/19 the National Housing Trust will:

- Deliver 4,734 housing completions and 6,369 housing starts to the market.
- Create more than 8,000 new loans.
- Review the housing development process and related policies to shorten the development cycle.
- Implement measures to incentivise developers to participate in the low-income housing segment.
- Implement a framework for partnership with employers in targeted industries for the provision of housing and unique mortgages to their employees.

Through greater access to funding and the creation of more housing solutions to the market, it is expected that the National Housing Trust will continue to make homeownership a reality for more Jamaicans in 2018/19.

Water

The Government continues to work towards the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

In the new fiscal year 2018/19, the Administration will continue to implement several projects and programmes to expand capacity and infrastructure, protect revenue, regularise service and users and protect water sources. Two of these major programmes/projects to be implemented by the Government, through its Departments and Agencies are:

- 1. Construction & Maintenance of Rural Water Systems:**
J\$120 million will be spent on the repair and upgrading of rural water systems, including catchment tank rehabilitation and rainwater harvesting; and
- 2. Irrigation Systems:** The Ministry plans to spend roughly J\$100 million on the rehabilitation of irrigation systems to improve delivery of irrigated water to farms towards enhancing Jamaica's agricultural productivity and food security.

Works

The Administration is paying keen attention to the growing problem of vehicular traffic congestion in our town centres and urban areas. The number of registered motor vehicles in Jamaica stands at 650,000, almost doubling in the last decade and growing presently at a rate of almost 4% annually. Our current roadways and intersections were not designed to carry these volumes of vehicular traffic. In the upcoming fiscal year 2018/19, under the Major Infrastructure Development Programme (MIDP), the Government will improve the carrying capacity of the following major traffic corridors:

- Completion of the Barbican Road and Mandela Highway Improvement Projects;
- Commencement and completion of the Ferris Cross to Macfield; and
- Commencement of civil works on Constant Spring and Hagley Park Road Projects.

Congestion is not only a function of carrying capacity of our roadways, it is a function of the discipline and consideration of road users as well. The National Works Agency (NWA) will continue the build-out of its broadband fibre optic infrastructure on which, several smart technological applications will be

installed to improve traffic management, enforcement and road safety and security. This fiscal year will see the installation of more cameras, licence plate recognition and other technologies to improve traffic regulation and enforcement.

Climate Change and the Environment

Under the **Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience (PPCR) Phase II - Improving Climate Data & Information Management**, the Government continues to work towards the improvement of Jamaica's climate change resilience through the:

- The procurement of hydro- and agro-meteorological equipment and spare parts for the Meteorological Services of Jamaica (MSJ), Water Resources Authority (WRA), and Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA);
- A new Doppler Weather Radar System;
- A sea level monitoring station;
- An improved climate data information platform;
- Further implementation of climate change education and awareness and behaviour change campaigns.

MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, AGRICULTURE & FISHERIES

Honourable Members, consolidated in this Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries are the major productive elements of the real economy, spanning agriculture, the distributive trade and manufacturing and we must maximise the linkages for success.

Following a 13.5% growth in the agriculture sector in 2016, the sector suffered from a period of bad weather in 2017 - drought in early 2017, floods in May/June and continuous rainfall into December.

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achievements.**

As such, preliminary estimates indicate that we will have a decline of 4%. But, despite the bad weather, there have been

notable achievements. This includes continued self-sufficiency in eggs, poultry, pork and tubers; 88% self-sufficiency in table Irish potato; and growth in non-traditional exports such as yam, ackee and sweet potato.

This year the Government will embark on an aggressive legislative agenda to support its strategic priorities to ensure food security, sustainable use of agricultural land & fisheries resources and facilitate an enabling local business environment. The legislation to be passed and enacted include:

1. The Fisheries Bill

This Bill will repeal and replace the existing Act for the better management of the Fishing Industry.

2. The Animals (Disease and Importation) (Change of Name and Amendment) Bill

To facilitate importation, distribution, storage etc. of animals and animal products and byproducts with regard to disease & safety.

3. The Insolvency (Amended) Act

To provide for regulation for insolvent financial institutions.

4. The Patents and Designs Bill

To ensure protection of local brands and to strengthen the local business environment by facilitating ingenuity as well as compliance with international treaties including the Patent Cooperation Treaty.

5. The Trade Marks (Amendment) Bill

To ensure protection of local brands and to strengthen the local business environment by facilitating ingenuity as well as give effect to the Madrid Protocol.

6. The Scrap Metal Act (Senate)

To transform the scrap metal regulation to an Act for better enforcement including the restriction of "brass" for export.

MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Honourable Members, last year was a busy one for the Ministry of Local Government as it sought to improve access to basic services for all Jamaicans. This buzz of activity will continue this year with:

- The enactment of the **National Solid Waste Management (Disposal of Solid Waste) Regulations** - this is to regulate the kinds of material which may be disposed of at a landfill and the manner in which such disposal is done; to impose tipping fees on users of the landfill based on the waste burden placed on the landfill by those users as well and to deal with the disposal of electronic waste;
- The enactment of the **National Solid Waste Management (Public Cleansing) Regulations**;
- The enactment of the **National Solid Waste Management (Disposal of Hazardous Waste) (Electronic and Electrical Waste) Regulations**; and
- Amendments to the **Fire Brigade Act** to abolish the Board of the Jamaica Fire Brigade and transfer the functions of the Board to the Ministry.

The Government will embark on the construction of fire stations in Montego Bay, Port Maria and Yallahs as part of the World Bank Disaster Vulnerability Project, which is to be administered by the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF).

The Administration will construct two drop-in centres in Trelawny and St. Thomas, making eight drop-in centres around the island as temporary accommodation for transient homeless persons. The Government will also build four homes for registered indigent persons, this year, in a programme to build 28 indigent homes across the island.

The Local Government Ministry is also programmed to purchase 12 garbage trucks as it moves towards enhanced waste collection and disposal.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, GENDER, ENTERTAINMENT AND SPORT

Honourable Members, the frequent attacks on our women and girls continue to be a major worry for all Jamaicans. This year **the Sexual Harassment Bill** to protect all women and men from unwanted sexual advances that affect quality of life will be tabled.

The proposed **Gender Advisory Council** is also to be established and operationalised to provide direct oversight for implementation of the National Strategic Action Plan for Gender-based Violence and also to re-think the gender discussion.

This year the Administration will begin work to build out entertainment zones in Fort Charles and Fort Rocky, Port Royal, Seville, St. Ann, Westmoreland and St. Catherine. The necessary legislative work and amendments to the various laws regulating entertainment will also be done in parallel.

The Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport this year, will further intensify its successful strategy of leveraging Brand Jamaica to attract international teams from various colleges and professional leagues to train in Jamaica. The Ministry will also be targeting world sporting bodies to host conferences in Jamaica.

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

The Ministry of Tourism is committed to the growth and development of Jamaica's economy, and has made significant strides to enhance the tourism sector. In supporting the Government's strategic priority, of economic growth and job creation, the Ministry employed the

The Ministry employed the 5x5x5 growth strategy...and has made significant strides to enhance the tourism sector.

the 5x5x5 growth strategy which targets a 5% increase in visitor arrivals annually and US\$5 billion in foreign exchange earnings within a five-year period.

This year the Ministry will table:

- **The Tourism Workers Pension Bill and Regulations;**
- **The Tourist Board Act Amendment;**
- **The Travel Agency Act and Regulations;**
- **The Bath of the Apostle Act Amendment and Milk River Act Amendment.**

During 2018/19, the Ministry of Tourism and its portfolio agencies will be guided in its implementation of projects by the Ministry's overarching programme areas of focus which include destination marketing, airlift support and tourism worker welfare.

MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY

This year, Jamaica's economic development will depend more on the science and technology sectors through growth in industries (increased production of value-added products), innovations (increased number of local patents being registered), employment and the energy sector through the development of energy infrastructure, security and efficiency to sustain the productive sectors.

The Ministry through its Agency, the Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica (PCJ), will implement the Energy Management and Efficiency Programme (EMEP), sponsored by the IDB/JICA (the Inter-American Development Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency) commencing in fiscal year 2018/2019. The three main objectives of EMEP include:

- **Reduced electricity consumption and carbon dioxide emission** in public sector facilities including hospitals, educational institutions and public sector facilities;
- **Reduction in travel times** and fuel consumption through improved traffic control management; and
- **Increased capacity in the Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology** so that it is enabled to update its Integrated Resource Plan for Jamaica.

The Government is seeking to enact the following legislation:

1. **Data Protection Act**
2. **The Information and Communications Technology Act (Telecommunications Act Repeal)**
3. **Information and Communications Authority Act**
4. **The Electricity (Electric Power Wheeling) Regulations**
5. **The Electricity (Net Billing) Regulations**
6. **The Electricity (Electrical Work, Registration and Licensing) Regulations Resolution**
7. **The Petroleum (Quality Control) Act**

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

The connection between our productivity as a people and our economic growth will continue to be emphasised this year as the Administration does its part to move Jamaica where we all want it to be.

This year, the Government will continue with amendments to the Minimum Wage Act to incorporate provisions related to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 189 relating to domestic workers.

The Ministry will also continue to facilitate job creation through growth in the overseas programme. This is being executed through a two-pronged approach. The first is to undertake measures to equip the workers with the necessary training and certification to enhance their ability to take advantage of available opportunities. The second is to identify and secure new job opportunities in the United States and Canada. Discussions are being held with a major university in Canada to facilitate training programmes for our farm workers.

The long awaited tabling of Jamaica's Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Act occurred at the beginning of the 2017-2018 fiscal year and, this year, this Bill will be placed higher on the legislative agenda of the **Honourable House** and given the opportunity to be sufficiently ventilated.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND INFORMATION

Last year the Government placed great emphasis at the Early Childhood level and continued the programme to convert basic schools into infant schools and infant departments.

A total of 20 infant schools and infant departments were established during the period and \$30 million was allocated to re-activate early childhood intervention programmes with some 25 basic schools rationalised.

This year, the Support Programme for the zero to three years will be a focus and the **Early Childhood Rationalisation programme** continued.

Money is to be provided from the e-learning budget allocation to assist in the sustainability of ICT in schools from the early childhood to secondary level, while five new schools are to be constructed. The first two are slated to be constructed in Manchester.

The legislative priorities for the fiscal year 2018/2019 include:

- 1) The modernisation of the legislation governing Broadcast and Content Regulation. This will address Payola; Digital Television Switchover; a technology agnostic definition of broadcasting; legislation to strengthen the regulation of harmful content for the protection of children and vulnerable audiences;
- 2) The recommendations from the review of the **Child Care and Protection Act** should be set before the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and promulgated;
- 3) The completion of the review of the **Children (Adoption of) Act** should be achieved.

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND MINING

The two areas of focus will be integrated transport development and promotion of the minerals sector. Work on the

phased resumption of the rail service will be intensified this year with the start of construction on Phase 1, from Montego Bay to Appleton, in this fiscal year.

The new **Road Traffic Bill**, which will repeal and replace the existing 1938 Act, was passed in the House of Representatives on February 6. It will establish new offences, as well as provide increased penalties for breaches. It is intended to reduce injuries and loss of life on the nation's roads thus leading to savings in the health sector. I encourage every road user to take personal responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others using our roads.

On the minerals side, the bauxite/alumina sector has started to see steady growth and will continue as the major players enhance expansion or modernisation activities. The finalisation of the **National Mineral Policy and Action Plan** will also take place this year.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE

Honourable Members, we influence global matters and our Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade continues to strengthen the links between Jamaica and the world.

This year, Prime Minister Andrew Holness will assume the Chairmanship of CARICOM from 1st July to 31st December 2018. This provides Jamaica with an opportunity to influence the Community's policy direction, development agenda and the regional integration process.

Jamaica will also use the opportunity to engage with CARICOM member states on the recently tabled recommendations of the Report of the CARICOM Review Commission.

The Ministry will also seek Parliamentary approval of the Foreign Trade Policy and ensure its timely implementation while recognising the importance of expanding foreign trade to the economic growth agenda.

In addition, the Ministry will intensify the implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing access by Jamaican nationals, skilled workers and businesses to the Caribbean Single Market and Economy's free movement regime.

CONCLUSION

Members of this Honourable House, Jamaica is now at a most crucial time in its development. There are encouraging signs that this land we love is poised for great things. This Administration is under no illusion as to the challenges; however, we know through the strength of our mighty people, we can accomplish what we will.

Let us join together to fight against any force, attitude or approach which threatens to block, divert or impede our pathway towards prosperity.

We are seeing the first sprouts of the sacrifices that we have made as a nation.

We must unite as one people and as one family to protect these germinating seeds of our prosperity.

Let us join together to fight against crime and violence.

Let us join together to fight against corruption.

Let us join together to fight against the abuse of our women and children, the disabled and the less fortunate.

Let us join together to fight against any force, attitude or approach which threatens to block, divert or impede our pathway towards prosperity.

Let us join together to protect the economic gains that we have made.

Let us join together to fight to grow our economy and to protect our environment to bring our people the bountiful harvest they deserve.

The time for unity is now.

Honourable Members, we all have an opportunity to work in partnership for the good of all Jamaicans.

We all have an opportunity to demonstrate to our people that together, united, as one nation under God, through fellowship and prosperity, we can advance the interest and welfare of all Jamaicans.

