



**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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THRONE SPEECH 2019

We gather here today, at the start of the new Parliamentary year, fully conscious of the fact that our individual and collective efforts play a crucial role in charting a course for a new Jamaica. Over the past three years, there has been great hope across the country and action towards prosperity. This is creating on the horizon a new Jamaica of which we all can be proud.

Although for some it is viewed as a mere ritual, the Throne Speech plays an important role in outlining the priorities of the Government for the new financial year, bringing together all arms of the state in partnership towards building the new and prosperous Jamaica.

It serves a purpose deep beyond tradition as it outlines:

- The legislative agenda for the Parliament;
- The policy agenda for the Executive and;
- The general direction of the Government.

We started 2019 on a positive note following one of the most successful years economically and socially in the country's modern history:

- Employment in Jamaica has never been higher;

- The period of economic growth has been sustained across fifteen quarters;
- Significant infrastructure projects across the island that promise to enhance efficiency and productivity are underway;
- Substantial progress has been made towards a safer and more secure Jamaica.

Honourable Members, crime and violence continue to be the greatest threat to the peace of the nation. Unity of purpose, commitment and determination from all Jamaicans and agencies of the state are required to overcome this challenge. It requires a shared vision, strategic planning, skill and dexterity in execution for us to achieve the peaceful and prosperous Jamaica that we all want. A new Jamaica has to be built on a foundation of social peace. This Administration has put in place tough and resolute measures to tackle crime. It must be noted that we had some success in 2018 with reductions in serious and violent crimes (Category 1) including:

- 22% reduction in murders;
- 22% reduction in shootings;
- 15% reduction in robberies;
- 12% reduction in rapes.

The Government will continue on its multi-dimensional path of increasing the safety and security of Jamaicans.

While applauding the successes, we can also acknowledge that challenges remain. These challenges must focus our minds and galvanise our collective efforts towards effective solutions that can bring forward the new Jamaica we all seek. This must lead to sobering thoughts, concrete actions and redoubling of our individual and collective efforts to build partnerships towards a prosperous Jamaica. We need to get it right to build our great nation, our new Jamaica.

A Jamaica where....

- We respect each other;
- We are peaceful and safe;
- We have a society characterised by equity and justice;
- We have access to opportunities to learn and improve;
- We have prospects to earn through gainful employment;
- We can all save, invest and prosper.

Honourable Members, in order to achieve this all branches of the Jamaican state, the whole Government – all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), must work seamlessly to achieve the desired outcomes, cognisant that their respective roles form a part of an entire solution.

Honourable Members, the Public Sector Transformation and Modernisation Programme remains a priority for the Government, to bring improved quality service delivery to the people of Jamaica. Following extensive consultations last year, a Service Excellence Policy was developed and will be submitted to Cabinet shortly. This will form part of the Government's thrust to transform and modernise the operations of the public sector as rationalising services will be even more critical going forward. This will be done through shared services, mergers and divestments which will result in the achievement of a smaller, focused, more efficient and coherent grouping of Public Bodies.

Honourable Members, inefficiencies in the procurement process across Government must be addressed. A comprehensive public procurement training certification programme and framework geared towards strengthening the capacity of public sector procurement practitioners was undertaken. One thousand one hundred and fifteen (1,115) procurement practitioners were trained.

The Cabinet Office has continued to strengthen results-based management across Government Ministries and selected Departments and Agencies in

the areas of strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation, and performance reporting.

Office of the Prime Minister

Honourable Members, consultations are continuing with civil society groups, government entities and the private sector to further refine the draft regulations for the National Identification and Registration Authority Act. The Government will continue the digitisation of the records of the Registrar General's Department, work on the business processes for enrolment, vetting, quality control, issuance, renewals, and consent-based identity verification in preparation for transitioning to a digital economy.

HOUSING, OPPORTUNITY, PRODUCTION, EMPLOYMENT (HOPE)

The Housing, Opportunity, Production and Employment (HOPE) Initiative is a training and apprenticeship programme that provides an opportunity for the development of young persons through a system of National Service Corps (in specific skill areas). The programme engages unattached youth between 18 and 24 years old in training, education, or employment. **Honourable Members**, across all Ministries, HOPE interns have played an important role and have been engaged in a range of functions including electronic records management, surveys, filing, data loss preventative maintenance, vector control, construction, audit and other duties. They are contributing daily while improving their employability.

In order to facilitate an efficient focus on human capital development, the Human Employment and Resource Training (Amendment) Act will be tabled. The Apprenticeship Act and the National Youth Service (NYS) Act will be repealed and the functions of the Apprenticeship Board, the NYS, and the Jamaican Foundation for Lifelong Learning will be vested in the HEART Trust.

Ministry of Finance and the Public Service

Honourable Members, the Jamaican economy has recorded fifteen (15)

consecutive quarters of economic growth. Several economic indicators point to vibrancy in the Jamaican economy and optimism among economic agents.

Inflation remains low. Investment inflows are strong. Job growth is at record levels. Jamaica's Net International Reserves are robust and the country's debt to Gross Domestic Product is expected to be below 100 per cent at the end of the fiscal year 2018/19. These are positive signs on which to build a firm foundation for a prosperous and new Jamaica for all.

Indeed, Jamaica is on a path to economic independence. In that regard, international partners have commended Jamaica's performance on several counts. Fitch Ratings Agency recently upgraded the Government of Jamaica's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer and Local Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) to 'B+' from 'B' and revised the outlook to "stable" from "positive". The agency also upgraded the country ceiling to 'BB-' from 'B'; representing Jamaica's highest credit rating in over 10 years.

The Government remains committed to the continuation of policies and programmes that enable a stable macroeconomic environment that facilitates the economic growth required for sustainable and inclusive development. In keeping with the thrust to improve corporate governance, Cabinet approved the Policy Guidelines for the nomination, selection and appointment of Boards of Public Bodies and the issuance of drafting instructions to the Chief Parliamentary Counsel for the drafting of regulations to be informed by sections of the Policy Guidelines.

Cabinet also approved the establishment of an Independent Fiscal Council for Jamaica as part of measures to strengthen Jamaica's Fiscal Responsibility Framework (FRF). The Fiscal Council will be an independent, non-partisan institution with the responsibility of helping to promote economically sustainable fiscal policies, monitoring the Government's compliance with the fiscal rules and informing the public on economic matters.

A Bill to modernise Jamaica's central bank and make inflation targeting the

cornerstone of monetary policy is before a Joint Select Committee of Parliament. A modernised and strengthened central bank will institutionalise and entrench low, stable and predictable inflation which is a critical platform for any modern economy.

Ensuring access to finance and deepening financial inclusion is a key objective of the Government. As such the Microcredit Act will be tabled that will provide the legislative framework for the private micro-credit lending sector.

Legislation to amend the Co-operative Societies Act and introduction of a prudential regulatory regime for credit unions, will strengthen deposit insurance and reduce risk.

Tax Administration Jamaica (TAJ) and the Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA) continue technology enhancements as part of measures to make revenue collection seamless, efficient and effective. The JCA plays a crucial role in revenue collection and border security activities. The Customs Act will be modernised through the repeal of the existing Act and replaced with a new Act to be tabled this year. This year Customs will bolster its Non-Intrusive Inspection Programme (NIIP) through expansion and utilisation of more modern cargo imaging scanners (fixed portal and mobile x-ray scanners with the use of x-ray technology for imports and exports) at the marine ports and warehouses in Kingston and Montego Bay.

Public Financial Management (PFM) including disaster risk management, border security and sound public policies that will result in greater domestic savings (debt reduction), faster economic growth, and better social protection will also be a priority.

Ministry of National Security

Honourable Members, in 2018, the Government delivered on its commitment to institute stringent measures to disrupt criminal networks, protect our borders

and meet the challenges of the future by embracing technology and improving intra- and inter-cooperation and coordination.

Honourable Members, addressing crime and violence is one of the most challenging tasks that require practical initiatives supported by robust legislative and policy frameworks. In this regard, to drive further security improvement, “Plan Secure Jamaica” requires new legislation and/or amendments to existing legislation, including:

- The Police Act: This will provide for the modernisation and transformation of the Jamaica Constabulary Force. It is now ready for approval by Cabinet and will be tabled this year.
- The Enhanced Security Measures Act will be developed and tabled this year. It must be noted that this Act requires focused unity of purpose as we must speak with one voice.
- The National Security Council Act which will introduce legislation to provide for the establishment in law of the National Security Council in law.
- Merger of the Police Services Commission and the Police Civilian Oversight Authority to facilitate the development of one oversight body responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the Police.
- Amendments to the Criminal Justice (Suppression of Criminal Organizations) Act, which is currently before a Joint Select Committee of Parliament, will be completed.
- Regulations to the Major Organised Crime and Anti-corruption Agency (MOCA) Act are currently being Act are to give the necessary support.
- Amendments to the Firearms Act will be made to strengthen the legislation in keeping with international standards and obligations of the Government of Jamaica.

- Amendments to the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) will ensure compliance with the recommendations of the update the Act for greater effectiveness.

In furtherance of securing Jamaica, this year the Government has allocated significant capital expenditure for National Security and Defence.

Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation

Honourable Members, the Government has been fostering synergies to drive economic growth in several areas consistent with the Government's growth policy. The Government will seek to increase the capacity of Jamaica's economy to produce goods and services. In so doing, the Government aims to create the conditions for sustained growth by:

- Improving the ease of doing business in Jamaica;
- Increasing Jamaica's resilience to environmental hazards and climate change
- Improving Jamaica's trade competitiveness and
- Providing opportunities for safe, affordable and legal housing, among others.

The Government recognises the need to promote efficient sustainable and inclusive development, to ensure interconnectivity and properly functioning ecosystems. This guides the work done under its portfolio in the areas of water, works, housing, land, environment, climate change and investment.

Importantly, this year the Government will undertake a comprehensive multi-agency national survey of squatter settlements, to accurately ascertain the extent of squatting in the country. It will also provide critical socio-economic, demographic and environmental information on these settlements that will inform the policy development process as well as intervention strategies.

This year, the Government will unveil a new Social Housing Programme (SHP) which will see the provision of indigent housing, relocation of vulnerable communities and the upgrading of tenements or 'Big Yards'. The new SHP will

be administered under the housing component of the HOPE through which employment opportunities will be provided for HOPE interns.

Drafting instructions are now being finalised for the amendments to the Registration (Strata Titles) Act, the Real Estate (Dealers and Developers) Act and the Timeshare Vacations Act, to give effect to the establishment of the Real Estate Authority of Jamaica for greater efficiency. The Government will also bring legislation to regularise communities with shared amenities not governed by the Registration (Strata Titles) Act.

Honourable Members, the National Housing Trust (NHT), is delivering on its policy direction to build more houses for Jamaicans. By providing greater access to funding and driving the creation of more housing solutions to the market, the Trust will be increasing its thrust to make homeownership a reality for more Jamaicans in 2019/20 and beyond.

Additionally, the NHT will review its construction management processes, redesign/enhance its customer-facing systems and implement an improved contribution accounting management system.

The NHT Strategic Review, which was already tabled, will be debated in this Honourable House this year, to strategically inform the approach to the housing sector.

Honourable Members, this year, your Government will table the National Investment Policy and the implementation of the action plan to improve the environment for both local and foreign investors.

The policy to divest or seek public ownership in Government assets continues:

- Norman Manley International Airport (NMIA) has been divested;
- The Initial Public Offering (IPO) for the Wigton Windfarm should be placed on

the Jamaica Stock Exchange by March this year;

- Among others to be announced soon.

The Government continues engagement with various stakeholders including the people towards the Government Campus Development for the modernisation and development of the National Heroes Park and surrounding lands. The Houses of Parliament project continues apace with designs for a new parliament through a competition garnering public support. This year, the Government will complete the procurement of the relevant expertise for a feasibility study and social impact assessment.

The Government will be completing all the major infrastructure legacy projects underway in Kingston, St. Catherine, and Westmoreland.

In addition, the Administration will also be embarking on major road works in the eastern section of the country to include St. Thomas, and Portland as well as to continue the major activities linking Clarendon to Manchester via the east-west toll road. This with the intention to make the road network more resilient through the construction of bridges, retaining walls and other features.

Honourable Members, a sustainable environment and climate resilience are critical to economic growth. This year the Government will amend the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (NRCA) Act, the Forest Act, the Wild Life Protection Act and the Watersheds Protection Act in its effort to strengthen the regulatory framework governing the management and sustainable use of our country's biological and natural resources.

The Government has successfully implemented the first phase of the ban on some plastic packaging materials and has announced its support of the private sector-led initiative to institute a deposit refund system on plastic bottles; which emanated from discussions at the National Partnership Council. The removal of these plastic from the waste stream will reduce the amount that end up in our gullies and other waterways contributing to the flooding in many urban centres.

This year, the Government will continue its focus on water by a significant increase in the budgetary allocation for rural water.

The Government continues to work assiduously to address the challenges being faced currently and will shortly announce some interim measures to improve the provision of consistent, potable water to the areas affected.

Ministry of Education, Youth and Information

Honourable Members continued focus will be placed on ensuring that an orderly society is created through fulfilment at the various stages of the life cycle. The Government through its strategies and programmes is committed to ensuring a seamless transition from the early childhood, through to the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

The Government has kept its commitment to providing examination subsidies for secondary level students sitting exit examinations in 2019, and cover the costs of all fees associated with examinations for up to eight (8) subjects for students on PATH and wards of the State who are eligible to receive the support.

Through various partnerships and initiatives, over 6000 computers and aided devices are being provided to schools at all levels. Additionally, in terms of infrastructure and to further integrate all students in the school community some One Hundred and Eleven (111) Primary schools were identified for the construction of ramps, for access to students with physical challenges, at a cost of fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000.00). This is being done along with other infrastructure work in schools to maintain and improve the plants.

This legislative year, the Government will bring amendments to the Child Care and Protection Act, and the Education Act and Regulations, while the new Higher Education Commission Act and Regulations, and the Jamaica Teaching

Council Act and Regulations will also be brought for your approval.

Ministry of Local Government and Community Development

Honourable Members, the Government achieved some critical milestones over the past year. Of note was the enactment of the Building Act 2018, which has been in effect since January 15, 2019. The Act provides standards for the built environment, including the establishment of the Building Code, qualification of construction workers and access for the physically challenged.

For this legislative year, the Ministry will give priority attention to procuring an unprecedented 100 garbage collection units for the National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA). This will significantly broaden the capacity of the agency and tremendously improve responsiveness.

Three key regulations governing solid waste disposal will be brought before this Honourable House this year:

- The National Solid Waste Management Authority (Disposal of Solid Waste Facilities) Regulations will seek to regulate the kinds of material which may be disposed of at a Disposal Site and the manner in which such disposal is done;
- The National Solid Waste Management (Public Cleansing) Regulations, which will outline the full schedule of penalties for all breaches of the Act; and
- The National Solid Waste Management Authority (Disposal of Hazardous Waste) (Electronic and Electrical) Regulations and Order which will provide for the disposal of hazardous waste to include electronic and electrical items.

The Jamaica Fire Brigade will acquire eight (8) pumpers in the 2019/20 financial year. The Agency will also acquire twenty (20) Life Rafts for flooding and swift water rescue. This equipment will strengthen the Brigade's ability to respond to emergencies across the country.

The Government continues work on the Human Services Bill which will come before this Honourable House this year to replace the Poor Relief Act, abolish the Board of Supervision, transfer the functions of the Board to the Ministry and modernise the structures through which human services are provided.

Regulations to the Local Governance Act and the Local Government (Financing and Financial Management) Act, to give operational meaning and clarity to the new standards of governance, and the new regime concerning the financing of Local Government are expected to be concluded and taken before this Honourable House for your consideration.

Ministry of Health

Honourable Members, the Government will continue priority focus on the promotion of a healthy and active lifestyle, to alleviate the effects of the non-communicable diseases (NCDs) burden on individuals and the health system. The Jamaica Moves programme continues to encourage Jamaicans to get moving to improve their health. The Government will continue to review its health service delivery model, health financing options and governance arrangements, with the aim of improving efficiency of the public health system and providing better health outcomes.

Among the achievements last year, the Government expanded and strengthened the capacity of the public health sector to provide oncology service to combat the cancer epidemic through the operationalisation of two linear accelerator (LINAC) machines; which are located at the St. Joseph's Hospital in Kingston and the Cornwall Regional Hospital in Montego Bay.

Another significant achievement saw access to National Health Fund (NHF) drugs at private pharmacies without sole dependence on hospitals or Drug Serv Pharmacies through the Government's Public Sector Pharmacy Programme. The Government will further strengthen health services delivery this year. Three

major hospitals (Spanish Town, May Pen and St. Ann's Bay) have been targeted for service upgrades in keeping with population expansion and the increased need for specialist medical services.

The Government will be pursuing the development of a Bill for comprehensive tobacco legislation in keeping with the country's obligations under the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. The objective of this Bill is to address areas not adequately covered in the existing legislation, which includes tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship as well as the prohibition of sales of all forms of tobacco products to minors.

Additionally, the Government will be developing a National Policy for the Reduction of the Harmful use of Alcohol. The main objectives of the Policy will be to regulate the advertising, promotion and sponsorship of alcoholic products, strengthen the health response to the harmful use, reduce road traffic accidents as a result of the use of alcohol and to monitor and evaluate the public health surveillance measures.

Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport

Honourable Members, Jamaica scored a major victory with the inscription of Reggae Music to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) list of intangible global cultural heritage of humanity. This demonstrates that Reggae Music has served to foster a better understanding of musical art as a tool for promoting dialogue among people and appreciating cultural diversity among ethnic groups worldwide.

Honourable Members, our cultural heritage is important. In 2018 your Government encouraged social inclusion through entrepreneurial training, capacity building and development to enable communities such as Port Royal and others to take advantage of the opportunities from World Heritage Designation.

For this legislative year, the Government will seek to amend the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT) Act to align Jamaica's valuable cultural heritage with global designation benchmarks and further promote Jamaica's culture. The Cultural and Creative Economy Act as well as the Entertainment Industry Act will also be brought to this Honourable House for approval.

There will be continued review of key pieces of legislation to support the elimination of gender-based violence, including the Domestic Violence Act, Offences Against the Persons Act, and the Sexual Offences Act. The Prevention of Sexual Harassment Bill will also be tabled.

In the area of Sport, the Government will conclude a review of the National Sport Policy along with a Study on the Contribution of Sport to National Development & Employment.

Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries

Honourable Members, additional responsibilities were assigned to the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries in 2018 with the inclusion of JAMPRO, the EXIM Bank, Agro-Investment Corporation and the National Irrigation Commission. These assignments to the Ministry served to add to the breadth and scope of its strategic objectives in accordance with its commitment to contribute to the GOJ's Strategic Priority of Sustainable Economic Growth and Job Creation. Increased production and productivity, infrastructure development and supporting of the MSME Sector will be the main focus.

To grow domestic production, keen focus will be paid to crops and meat that support the import-substitution agenda as well as increased sales, exports and large investors through targeting of CARICOM, the Diaspora, the school feeding programme, hotels and restaurants.

The Government, through the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA), will continue the rehabilitation of approximately 1,000 kilometres of

farm roads in addition to embarking on an Infrastructure Development Programme for Agro-Parks and Agro-Economic Zones.

Ministry of Labour and Social Security

Members of this Honourable House, strategic priorities for the Government continue to be social protection, human capital development and inclusive sustainable job creation and economic growth.

Last September, PATH commenced the payment of a “Back to School Grant” with approximately J\$560M disbursed through this new initiative, with 160,000 students receiving grants of J\$3,500 each. This will be an annual benefit paid to school children on PATH in the month of August.

In order to promote financial inclusion, improve administrative efficiency, and reduce costs while ensuring greater accessibility and ease of collecting benefits, the Government will be fully implementing the automated/electronic payments to some 128,000 PATH beneficiary families. The Government will also undertake a programme to transition PATH families from welfare to work.

As part of a focus on the aged population who have a wealth of knowledge and experience, we will seek to increase access to employment for older persons through the National Council for Senior Citizens Golden Age Support Programme.

Honourable Members, last year, a total of 16,749 workers were placed in employment overseas through the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) and another 2,879 were placed through Private Employment Agencies monitored by the MLSS.

In the upcoming legislative year, the Government will continue the review of the National Insurance Act and Regulations, complete revision of the National Policy for Senior Citizens and finalise the Regulations and Codes of Practice on

Education and Training and Employment in support of the Disabilities Act.

Ministry of Tourism

Honourable Members, following the most successful year in tourism in 2018, the Government will set even higher targets for continued sustainable growth in the sector.

The Government is, therefore, working to attract and facilitate new public and private investments, developing and opening new destinations and attractions, training and certifying more tourism workers, supporting and facilitating more entrepreneurs and innovators, and integrating more technology into tourism products and services to drive productivity and make the tourism experience more fulfilling and seamless.

The Government will continue its innovation through partnership with the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF) and EXIM Bank offering special loan facilities to small tourism enterprises. The facility offers loans of between J\$5 to J\$25 million dollars to enable continued growth and sustainable development of the tourism sector. Starting this year, the programme will be expanded to allow micro-sized tourism enterprise to access loans of less than J\$5 million dollars. After much consultation with the industry, for this legislative year, the Government will table the Tourism Workers Pension Bill and Regulations. This Bill will give tourism workers secure welfare during their retirement. The Government will also seek the approval of this Honourable House to amend the Tourist Board Act to modernise the provisions of the Act and its regulations and strengthen the enforcement provisions. The Government will also seek to amend the Travel Agency Act and Regulations to bring more modern provisions in keeping with global industry standards.

Ministry of Transport and Mining

Honourable Members, the Government will be pursuing four main priority areas

that are geared towards contributing to its strategic priority of Inclusive Sustainable Economic Growth and Job Creation and the Millennium Development Goal 7 to Ensure Environmental Stability. The Government will prioritise:

- Development of an Integrated Transport System (land, rail, sea and air)
- Implementation of the Road Traffic Act (Establishment of the Island Traffic Authority as a Statutory Body)
- Promotion and Expansion of the Mineral Sector.

The Transport and Mining sectors are poised to play a crucial role in the transformation and development of Jamaica. With the passage of the new Road Traffic Act, and the introduction of a dedicated police unit to address public safety and good order, the public can expect to see a return to discipline and order on our roads.

This year, the Transport Authority Act will be amended to allow for a new system to be implemented to address renewal of licences on birthdays and extended licence.

The Jamaica Urban Transit Company (JUTC) underwent significant technological innovations to reduce losses and enhance rider experience. These strategies will be intensified in the coming legislative year.

Bauxite and alumina have provided many benefits to the Jamaican economy. Even after more than 50 years of mining in Jamaica, there are still huge quantities of high-quality bauxite available. The revitalisation of the global and local industries is to be evidenced by the reopening and expansion of closed Bauxite/Alumina Plants. We will be improving the laboratory and begin upgrading the Mines and Geology Department so that it can respond to the needs of a dynamic and demanding industry.

The implementation of the first phase of the privatisation of the railway (Montego Bay to Appleton) will be pursued this year to include in addition to rail-related implementation activities, facilitating the relocation of squatters/informal settlers from within the rail reservation.

Honourable Members, Government is taking a multi-pronged approach to implementing innovations and leveraging synergies. In this regard, the Airports Authority of Jamaica has devised and commenced further upgrades of the Ian Fleming International Airport (IFIA) to drive growth in the tourism and air transportation sectors. The expanded airport facilities will be able to accommodate particular design aircraft types for an increase in commercial passenger movement and general aviation traffic.

Ministry of Justice

Honourable Members, the Government engaged in spearheading the most consequential modernisation of the Court system in Jamaica to date. In 2018, the new Court of Appeal building in downtown Kingston was opened, along with several reforms to improve the delivery of justice across the country.

The Government will continue to rehabilitate and make new investments in critical physical court infrastructure and new technologies to increase efficiency. Additionally, this year the Ministry will establish six (6) Justice Centres island-wide to coordinate alternative disputes resolution activities and enable easier access to justice services by members of the public. With the completion of these Justice Centres, the Ministry would also have fulfilled one of the binding obligations under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) to have Child Diversion facilities (Justice Centres) fully operational as at March 2020.

This year, the St. Catherine Family Court (in Spanish Town) will be completed, to reduce the large caseload of family court matters in the parish. Architectural designs are being completed to support the construction of a Regional Judicial Complex, (a regional Supreme Court, High Court and Family Court) in Western

Jamaica to co-locate justice services to address infrastructural gaps and judicial complexes in St. Ann, St. James and Manchester.

The Government will implement an Electronic Case Management System across the Justice Sector, to ensure the timely disposal of cases and complete the installation of video and audio technology in seventy-eight (78) Courtrooms across nineteen (19) Courts to facilitate video evidence and electronic recording of evidence.

This year amendments will be made to the:

- Public Defender's (Interim) Act: To establish a National Human Rights Institute
- Law Reform (Notice of Alibi) Bill: To include the requirement for defence counsel to give notice of their intention to rely on an alibi
- Statutory Revision and Amendment of the INDECOM Act: A Proposal to widen the powers of the Commission (e.g., powers of arrest and other powers akin to a Constable's powers)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade

Honourable Members, Jamaica's visibility and leadership in international affairs have been magnified over the past three years and the Government will use the momentum of an extremely active 2018 to build even further on the successes achieved.

Engagements will continue at the bilateral, regional and international levels with our partners including and especially the Diaspora. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade will focus on the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals derived from Agenda 2030 and our own Vision 2030. The primary objectives are to further Jamaica's inclusive sustainable economic growth and job creation agenda as well as the promotion of peace and prosperity for peoples across the globe.

Your Government will implement a new foreign affairs management strategy to include the restructuring and strengthening of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headquarters and overseas representational functions. The newly constructed office building in downtown Kingston will undoubtedly facilitate the Ministry's improved operational capacity.

This year, the Government will work assiduously to leverage new opportunities in both traditional and non-traditional partner countries to support trade, investment and technical cooperation pursuits.

CARICOM as an important partner will be engaged towards the full implementation of the Single Market and Economy including the provisions for free movement of a wider category of skilled nationals across the region.

The conclusion of a robust post-Cotonou Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union is essential to maintaining the momentum of Jamaica's valuable partnership with the European Union which remains Jamaica's most significant donor partner. We will continue to play our role in seeking to conclude successful negotiations this year.

Honourable Members, even as the United Kingdom prepares to exit the European Union in the coming weeks, the Government has been ardently engaged with the rest of CARIFORUM in working towards the conclusion of an Economic Partnership Agreement with the UK that mirrors the acquis of the current agreement with the EU, preserving preferential terms for trade in goods and services.

At the level of the United Nations, the Government will, through the mandate given to the Prime Minister by the UN Secretary-General, seek to sensitise and garner the rest of the international community in relation to our collective responsibility to provide funding to address the global impact of climate change.

For the legislative year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade will bring to this Honourable House the UN Security Council Resolution Implementation Act (Amendment), the Terrorism Prevention (Amendment) Act and a Bill to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention and the related UN Security Council Resolution 154.

Conclusion

Honourable Members,

Jamaica's prospects have scarcely been brighter.

Our opportunities far exceed our challenges.

Our potential surpasses even our greatest expectations.

Jamaica is blessed. We all are blessed.

Together, we must seize the opportunities.

Together, we must maximise our collective potential.

Together, we must move from thought to rapid implementation.

Let us work in partnership to build a new Jamaica, where the tree of prosperity is firmly rooted, delivering fruit for all Jamaicans.

