

KEYNOTE ADDRESS



HON. ANTHONY HYLTON

MINISTER OF INDUSTRY, INVESTMENT & COMMERCE

JEA NATIONAL EXPORTERS MONTH COCKTAIL LAUNCH

Jamaica Pegasus Hotel

Monday, June 1, 2015 at 5:30pm

## **Salutations**

- Mrs. Marjory Kennedy, President, Jamaica Exporters Association
- Mr. Claude Fletcher, General Manager, Jamaica Exporters Association
- Board members of the Jamaica Exporters Association
- Representatives of the public sector
- Members of the media
- Specially invited guests
- Exporters all ... Good evening

**I extend my congratulations and those of the Most Honourable Prime Minister and the entire Government, on the launch of National Exporters Month.**

As we gather to commemorate the start of National Exporters Month, I am pleased to see that the month of activities has started with a bang! The range of representatives from across Government and the private sector in attendance this evening highlights the high value placed on the export sector.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Government of Jamaica has adopted an export- centric approach for the economic development of our country. This year's theme, "**Achieving Economic Growth through Excellence in Exports**" is, therefore, fitting as it speaks to the importance of exports as the way forward for the development of the economy- not just as a short term strategy but something we must be committed to for the long haul. It underscores that the approximately 2.7 million consumers in the Jamaican market are

not enough to facilitate sustainable economic growth and we must look beyond our borders.

It is noteworthy that, much of the recent reforms spearheaded by the National Competitiveness Council and my Ministry are geared at making it easier for Jamaican businesses to become export ready and to facilitate opportunities for them to access international markets. Indeed, our improvement in major global business indices is the result of deliberate efforts by the Government to improve the business environment, from which the export sector will benefit.

The recent upgrade in Jamaica's Government bond rating by Moody's, one of the three major credit rating agencies in the world, was guided by our fiscal consolidation, a strong commitment to structural reform, our efforts to improve our balance of payments position and to reduce our external vulnerabilities. These ratings will improve even further as we continue on our path of sustained fiscal consolidation designed to reduce our debt ratios and to achieve higher GDP growth.

Ladies and gentlemen, now more than ever we must recognize that an increase in exports presents the most viable option for GDP growth and increased investor confidence. By extension, it is therefore, the most realistic way to improve our international credit rating. As such; I have always maintained that the Logistics Hub Initiative and the logistics-centered economy pivot on exports.

Let me take a few minutes to update you on the work being done by the Government that will have an impact on the export sector.

- The National Export Strategy Phase II, 2015-2019 is near completion. This strategy is an improvement on the previous NES 2010-2013 as it focuses on fewer, more precise and more impactful initiatives for the priority sectors and cross cutting areas. As we speak, consultants are incorporating the final strategy document in preparation for the Phase II launch on June 30, 2015.
- The creation of an improved trade facilitation regime is also underway. This is being spearheaded by the Trade Facilitation Task Force. Only two weeks ago, I attended a validation workshop for public and private sector officials to discuss the targeted reforms that are needed to achieve effective and efficient trade facilitation.

You will note that the Jamaica Customs Agency has begun the implementation of ASYCUDA World and the revised Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Programme. These are critical elements for a modern trade facilitation regime, but it requires full participation by all regulatory ministries, agencies and departments in streamlining their own processes. The trade facilitation implementation plan will, therefore, incorporate initiatives from across Government, including the Single Electronic Trade Window, which is an urgent priority.

- The legislation for the establishment of the Special Economic Zones will come on stream later this year. The SEZs will enable Jamaican businesses to provide products and services to large scale local and international organisations operating out of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs). This will allow for the participation of micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs), thereby, fostering broad based and inclusive growth.

- The protection of intellectual property cannot be understated. Only last Tuesday, I started off the debate in Parliament for the amendments to Copyright Act which will move the term of copyright in Jamaica from 50 to 95 years. This is part of a targeted move to create a modern intellectual property regime that includes amendments to the Trade Marks Act and the ongoing accession to the Madrid Protocol, which allows international registration of trademarks registered in one country (such as Jamaica) to be protected in the territories of the up to 95 members of the World Intellectual Property Organization.

Ladies and gentlemen, this work across Government is supported by various programmes and initiatives to provide capacity building services, and ensure applicability of the policies and services to the long term and aspiring exporter.

- JAMPRO in its capacity of international market developer has been hard at work to provide support to the exporting community as well as hopeful exporters through a variety of capacity building and export promotion programmes. These include, the yearly workshop series: Step by Step Guide to Exporters in Montego Bay and Kingston, the award winning Export Max programme, Road show USA and its strategic alliance with the Fresh Producers Consortium in the United Kingdom, just to name a few.
- The Jamaica Business Development Corporation as the leading agency for MSME capacity building, offers a variety of programmes. These include the North Coast Revitalization Project, the Mobile Business Clinic and the annual Small Business Expo, all designed to facilitate the development of a stronger and more competitive MSME sector.

- The Bureau of Standards as the leading agency in the development of the National Quality Infrastructure ensures that companies meet and adhere to international standards. The Business Partnership Programme to get companies HACCP certified is one such initiative that falls under the BSJ.

Additionally, Jamaica was one of only three countries selected by the Food and Drug Administration to have participated in a 2013 'pilot' programme whereby BSJ's Food Inspectors conducted follow-up inspections on behalf of the FDA. The objective is to have Jamaican food safety systems deemed comparable to that of the US and other major markets to ensure ease of access for our exporters.

The point here is that Government does not seek to be esoteric in creating policies and legislation that would not be felt by the average exporter. We consult with you before the implementation of policies and legislation; we also create programmes to ensure that you are able to access and utilize the new framework.

Despite some gains, I understand that there remains much to be done in the development of the sector and I promise to remain steadfast in working towards a better environment, not just for exporters, but for all Jamaican businesses.

In closing, let me commend the Jamaica Exporters Association for your work in coordinating the activities during this month. It shows that you have remained true to your mandate of addressing the needs of Jamaica's export sector through advocacy and creative strategies to support your expansion and development.

To the Jamaican people, you can be assured of the continued support of your Government as together we work to achieve the national objectives of sustainable economic growth, job creation, business expansion, social stability and economic prosperity of all our people.

I wish you all an enriching National Exporters Month of activities.

I thank you.