

Remarks for Minister Daryl Vaz

Minister without Portfolio

Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation

Launch of the Green Economy Scoping Study For Jamaica

Tuesday, 22nd March 2016

@9:00 a.m.

at

The Devonshire, Kingston

THE GREEN ECONOMY – A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

It is an honour for me to be here today for the launch of the Green Economy Scoping Study for Jamaica.

On behalf of the Government of Jamaica, I want to offer a warm welcome, to everyone, particularly to my colleague, Dr. the Hon. Denis Lowe, Minister of the Environment and Drainage in Barbados.

Barbados is a leader in the region in terms of the 'greening' of the economy, and I am sure that we are all anxious to hear of your experiences, including the lessons learned, and to adopt your best practices in moving the Green Economy agenda for Jamaica forward.

I should add also that it is an honour for Jamaica to host the new UNEP Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean, and I look forward to formally opening this office in the near future. I also want to welcome the new Head of the Sub-Regional Office, Mr. Vincent Sweeney.

This office will have more direct contact with its constituents in translating the UNEP work programme, than the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC).

Ladies and gentlemen, it is only fitting that the launch of this Green Economy Scoping Study should take place on World Water Day, as the quality of our water resources is closely linked with, and is profoundly impacted by the quality of our environment. An environment that is thriving and rich with biodiversity, is a good indication of excellent water resources, but the converse is also true.

Along with this launch, the Ministry, its agencies and partners have set up an expo in celebration of World Water Day which is an annual event for us. You would have noticed the tents on the lawns upon entering the compound and I encourage you all to tour the expo.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to recognize and express our sincere appreciation to our partners in this green initiative.

The European Commission, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, and a host of other development partners, have given continuous assistance and support for Jamaica's environmental policies and programmes.

The research that our academics conduct, on the environment and climate change, is also critical to our sustainability as a country, and I wish to recognize and thank them for helping us to gain a better understanding of the impact of Man on the environment.

Our Non-Governmental Organizations continue to play a critical role in key environmental initiatives at the local level, as well as in advocating the national environmental agenda. Their voices are critical in the process towards achieving our goals for sustainability, and we will lend a listening ear, and seek increased dialogue with them on issues to do with the environment and climate change.

Ladies and gentlemen, we recognize that sound environmental management, and healthy ecosystems, are pivotal to the country's socio-economic development. We firmly believe that wealth and economic stability must not come at the cost of the environment, or create social inequality.

Just this weekend, I had the pleasure of launching the East Portland Fish Sanctuary, which is aimed at replenishing our over-fished waters and safeguarding the livelihood of our fishers. Fishing is one of the mainstays in Portland and indeed in the island. Without the fish sanctuary and other similar initiatives, one of the most vulnerable groups in the population would be even more at risk of becoming marginalized.

This Scoping Study reveals that the green economy provides a robust engine for economic growth and job creation. This is in keeping with the tenets of our ministry.

It is a generator of jobs, which is a vital strategy for the elimination of poverty, and a pathway to prosperity for our people and our country.

The report also encourages policy makers to create the enabling framework for increased investments, in the transition to a green economy, and more importantly, it reiterates the need for Public-Private Partnerships.

This administration firmly believes in the public-private partnership model, as a means of overcoming constraints on public resources and fiscal space.

The Study sets out several options of enabling conditions for the five sectors covered under the scoping study, Agriculture, Construction, Energy, Tourism and Water.

The five targeted sectors in the Scoping Study, were selected to be the first for examination under the Project, due to their direct impact on the environment, as well as their contribution to the economic growth and development of Jamaica.

These sectors are the country's primary foreign exchange earners, the largest consumers of water, and significant energy consumers.

I see the opportunities for public-private partnerships in all the sectors covered, in the kinds of technology and innovation that will drive sustainable development.

However, we must advocate for greater involvement and renewed commitment by the private sector in terms of their environmental stewardship and corporate social responsibility.

I therefore call on the leaders of the private sector and on all corporate entities, many of whom are here today, to fully embrace the green economy and other environmental initiatives.

Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that our commitment to sustainable development is strengthened today, with the formal launch of Jamaica's Green Economy policy papers.

They provide a response to challenges facing the country such as poverty, inequitable sharing of the growing prosperity, and environmental degradation.

Ladies and gentlemen, with the launch of this Scoping Study, I am pleased that Jamaica is now poised to take its place among those countries that have integrated the Green Economy concept into their national development plans.

In closing, I wish for everyone a fruitful and productive forum and look forward to, the initiatives to be pursued in to achieve our sustainable development goals.