

Presentation by

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Better Coordination of Economic, Education, Health and Labour Policies to Address and Overcome the Effects of the Crisis and Achieve the Future of Work we Want.

Salutations

- Covid-19 has brought us into uncharted waters.
- Our survival and recovery can only be assured and strong, if we embrace better coordination and collaboration using our collective wisdom and shared experiences.
- We must develop the best policy mix to reduce inequality and promote healthy society, transformative educational development, inclusion, growth and sustainable development in a changing world of work strongly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The lifeblood of any economy is underpinned by its human resources.
- Therefore, as we embark on this new journey, it is important that we balance the lives and livelihoods of our people.
- Clearly, the economy, the education system, the health sector, and Labour are inseparable pillars upon which our recovery and the decent work agenda must be anchored.
- These are common threads that run through the fabric of the economies of the region.

Economy

- Prior to COVID, Jamaica's Fiscal Space was opening up.
- Debt levels had significantly improved, moving from 145.8% in 2012/13 to 94.4% in 2019/20.

- However, due to COVID 19, the economy experienced significant contractions.
- Despite this, the state has made valiant efforts to secure jobs during COVID-19.
- As a government, we are proud that the pandemic did not significantly affect the earnings of public sector workers and loans and grants have been provided to the Micro, Small and Medium Size Enterprises to stimulate the economy and help us recover stronger.
- We instituted a multi-billion-dollar COVID Allocation of Resources for Employees (CARE) programme to cushion the economic impact of COVID-19.
- The Government also allocated \$800 Million to implement the Social Pension Programme this fiscal year.

- The programme targets seniors, who are not in receipt of a pension, disability benefit or other retirement benefit or income.

Education

- Continuous development of human capital is a key component to achieving Jamaica's growth objectives.
- Irrefutably, education underpins National Development individually and collectively.
- Indeed, this unprecedented disruption of the system by the pandemic continues to be examined.
- While the impact is still not yet fully understood and documented, the evidence suggests that learning deficit from the online modality is significant due to connectivity, access to devices and inadequate home supervision.
- The pandemic has highlighted the stark differences and inequalities between those who have easy access to available technology, and those who do not.

- COVID-19 has changed the world.
- We now utilize mobile health and learn through online apps.
- The way work is organized is changing too, as remote work is now possible for more people.
- COVID-19 has fueled and fast tracked more opportunities for implementing hybrid modalities and blended approaches to training, learning and work.
- We continue to be faced with the issue of low skilled and low educated workforce.
- There is a need to focus on upskilling and training for the Fourth Industrial Revolution to prepare our children and young people for their future.
- As a Ministry, we recognize this.
- That's why we have engaged over 300 interns and placed them in several communities across the island.

- They are receiving much needed work experience and on the job training while also supporting our social workers in data collection.
 - With their help, we are identifying vulnerable persons for services and programmes they would not normally access.
- We recognize the need to improve core competencies and skills such as resilience, adaptability, critical thinking, problem solving, entrepreneurialism -- the “future skills” required to be lifelong learners.
- With increases in life expectancy, workers remain active in the workforce for longer. Longer working lives and rapidly changing skill-demands increase the need for continuous learning throughout life.
- The Ministry, provides online services for jobseekers and facilitates the efficient matching of jobseekers with prospective employers through the Labour Market Information System.
- No one knows what the future of work and future of learning will look like after the pandemic, or what the next crisis will be, but

we know that **better multisectoral coordination will enable us to be better prepared to keep up with the pace of change and innovations and the responsive policies needed.**

Health

- The health sector is essential to both society and the economy.
- It provides a significant percentage of jobs worldwide, contributing to social and economic development. It is essential to social, physical and mental well-being and to the health of the working populace.
- Better and the appropriate investments in health and education can result in substantially greater participation in the labour force.
- As is evident today, the health sector has come under immense pressure, with the COVID 19 pandemic.
- The changes will provide not only opportunities but also challenges to the tripartite governments, employers and workers in the sector.

- We can – and should – emerge from the pandemic with new models, stronger policies, robust and relevant legislation and a workforce that is sustainable, engaged, inclusive, diverse and resilient.

Labour

- The decent work agenda must be pursued with relentless strides not only to bring dignity to every facet of work, but to bring about efficiency, higher productivity rates, industrial peace and harmony and a better understanding among the tripartite-government, employer and employee, as they work towards achieving common goals.
- The pursuit of Flexi Work, Social Protection, Labour Market Resilience, Occupational Safety and Health and amendments to Labour policies and legislation are high priority areas of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security we fulfil the requirements of the Decent Work Agenda.

- An inter-ministerial collaborative approach must be embraced by all, recognizing that the learning environment is not homogeneous, but diverse, adaptive and multifaceted.
- Effective and better coordination is essential as we progress towards achieving a more meaningful future of work, conscious that the challenges faced are shared and increasingly complex, and require joint efforts and policies to overcome.
- Greater synergies and gains can be made with a strategy that is flexible and agile...
- One that promotes and increases partnership, participation, cooperation, social dialogue where multi-stakeholder involvement is indispensable in informing policy design and implementation in the context of a dynamic local, regional and global environment ensuring that no one is left behind.
- Greater coordination is critical in helping us to build a more resilient world of work, with sustainable development, decent work, productive employment and social inclusion.

- Ladies and gentlemen, my fellow ministerial colleagues, we must stay committed to embrace a vibrant, cohesive and resilient inter-sectoral co-ordination of Economic, Education, Health and Labour to achieve greater policy coherence as we address and overcome the effects of the crisis and achieve the decent work agenda of the future.