



# **JAMAICA**

## **COUNTRY STATEMENT**

**2018 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**

**Cartagena, Colombia**

**Presented by Hon. Desmond McKenzie CD, JP, MP**

**Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Jamaica**

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- **Mr. Chairman**
  - **Colleague Ministers**
  - **Excellences**
  - **Delegates**
  - **Ladies & Gentlemen**
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- **I am delighted to be here at this Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction. On behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, I wish to express appreciation and thanks to the Government and people of Colombia for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality my Delegation and I have received.**

- **Jamaica places a high priority on disaster risk reduction efforts. We have long recognized the importance of disaster risk management, and even more specifically, the connection between reducing disaster risk and the achievement of our development objectives.**
- **As a participating state of CDEMA, we have adopted our regional Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy 2014-2024, which is our regional framework for the implementation of the Sendai Framework, 2015.**
- **Over the past two decades, our reality of being a Small Island Developing State, located in a region prone to disasters, has resulted in significant infrastructure and social capital losses, which have cost our country an average of 2-3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).**
- **Since the adoption of the Sendai Framework, Jamaica has continued through successive political Administrations, to develop a contemporary, functional and evolving disaster management and mitigation infrastructure to meet its obligations as a Signatory.**

- Very recently, these efforts are being driven at the policy level by the Government's articulated position, that disaster management and mitigation will now be integrated into the promotion and achievement of Jamaica's economic growth and development.
- What this effectively means is that instead of being responses to disasters, *spatial management infrastructure including a modern drainage network and roads, will be a continuous feature of Capital Investment and Works projects, generating economic opportunities and a new, resilient and continuously refreshed national built environment.*
- This is consistent with the Government of Jamaica's vision and strategic intent of strong, sustainable economic growth resulting in *prosperity* for our people. This is best achieved in partnership with citizens who are highly sensitized and attuned to disaster risk reduction as fundamental to their personal survival and prosperity.

- With regard to ***Priority 1*** of the Sendai Framework – ***the need for improved understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions*** – the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, as the parent Ministry of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), Jamaica’s disaster management Agency, initiated in July 2017 a series of consultative **Town Hall Meetings** across Jamaica.
- These Meetings, which will continue this year, are specifically about disaster awareness, preparation and risk reduction. The ODPEM has also, in conjunction with the start of the 2018 Atlantic Hurricane Season, officially launched the national Hurricane Awareness Campaign. The main objectives of this Campaign are population awareness, acceptance of, and active response to disaster management and risk reduction as the ***new normal of the Jamaican life experience***.

## **JAMAICA'S LEGISLATIVE RESPONSE TO ITS INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS – THE BUILDING ACT 2018**

- The distilling of policy into legislation consistent with the Sendai Priorities is also evident in the provisions of the Building Act 2018 and the Disaster Risk Management Act 2015, both of which were approved by the Jamaican Parliament since the adoption of the Framework.
- The Building Act 2018 is a comprehensive legislative response to the challenges of applying contemporary international standards to the built environment and to those who construct it, monitoring and enforcing these standards, and cauterizing unauthorized land use including squatting.
- In this regard, the Act facilitates the realization of the third and fourth **Global Objectives of the Sendai Framework**. (Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030; Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, through developing their resilience by 2030).

- The Act vests the fundamental powers of regulation and enforcement in Local Government, through the Local Authority in each parish in the country, which functions as the **Local Building Authority**. It also gives the Authority the discretion to seek public and private sector expertise, to ensure that internationally-recognized engineering standards and practices govern all construction practices.
- The Building Act provides for:
  - The accreditation of building products, construction methods, building components and building systems;
  - The regulation of training and certification standards, licensing of building practitioners and recognition of building professionals who are regulated under other laws.
- The Act also gives effect to Jamaica's **National Building Code**, which governs all construction activities, as well as to the **Bureau of Standards Jamaica**, which, as the already established national standards-setting and enforcement Agency, is the body responsible for prescribing the Code and setting all standards.

- In recognition of the fact that our Local Building Authorities may not have all the technical skills they need to execute these assessment and regulatory functions, the Building Act allows them to contract the expertise they need. This is a special feature of the Act, which also serves to reduce expenditure pressure on central government, while allowing local government the autonomy to continuously expand the breadth and quality of its expertise through its own sources of financing.
- Critically also, the Building Act allows the Local Building Authorities to keep the moneys they collect as fines for breaches, and add them to its Own Source Revenue base as a means of development financing.

### **THE DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT ACT 2015**

- As the legislative instrument that was passed shortly after the Sendai Framework was adopted, the **Disaster Risk Management Act** meets among other things, the **Second** of the Framework's **Four Priorities for Action**.

- This Act not only *strengthens disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk*, but provides a highly involved architecture that formalizes national partnership between central and local government, government and non-government individuals and mechanisms.
- The disaster management and mitigation connection between the regulation of construction activities, as is intended by the Building Act, and the prohibition of land use in designated areas, which are generally called *No-Build Zones*, is very clear in the Disaster Risk Management Act.
- These are areas where the vulnerability to floods or earthquakes or other hazards is so great, that mitigation efforts are either impractical or impossible.
- The **Disaster Risk Management Act** is specially connected to the **Building Act**, through provisions which give Ministerial powers for the creation of *Specially Vulnerable Areas*, which are the No Build Zones. Regulations are also being prepared, to give operational clout to these provisions.



- These legislative tools are being supported by a range of Government Agencies in conjunction with ODPEM, which have continuously been mapping vulnerable communities and areas across the island, an activity that is critical to the identification of *No Build Zones*, and to their designation as *Specially Vulnerable Areas*.
- The Disaster Risk Management Act also goes further, to create a clear disaster risk management and reduction network across Jamaica, which is given policy leadership by the National Disaster Risk Management Council.
- The emphasis on active governance in disaster risk management is demonstrated by the fact that the Act requires the Council to be led by the Prime Minister of Jamaica, with the Minister of Local Government and Community Development as the Deputy Chairman. This designation is also critical, as the ODPEM – which is Jamaica’s Disaster Management and Risk Reduction Agency – falls under the custodianship of the Minister of Local Government.

- One of the critical features of the Act is the emphasis on ensuring continuously functioning disaster management and risk reduction mechanisms across the country. Accordingly, it requires each of Jamaica's 14 parishes to have a **Parish Disaster Committee**, led by the Mayor of each Local Authority, and outlines the functions of Local Authorities to prevent, mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters within their local jurisdictions.
- The Act also requires a culture of evolution and creativity in dealing with management and mitigation issues, by obliging the ODPEM to produce a draft **National Disaster Response Co-ordination Plan every five years**, the areas the Plan must address and the stakeholders to be involved in the consultation and reporting processes.
- These legislative manifestations of Jamaica's seriousness about our disaster risk reduction commitments, govern the current and future management and mitigation activities and partnerships being pursued by the Government of Jamaica.

- Critical among these is a partnership with the United National Development Programme (UNDP) to build resilience in Jamaica through a special disaster risk reduction project beginning in 2019.
- This will result in the creation of Local Risk Reduction Management Centres, the development of national climate information and early warning services for disaster risk reduction and the development and implementation of Disaster Risk Reduction and Adaptation Plans, for implementation at the community level.
- **This project will be implemented at a cost of US \$1 million, and the project development phase has already commenced, with three of Jamaica's 14 parishes having been** identified as the target locations.

## **CONCLUSION**

- Mr. Chairman, esteemed colleagues, Jamaica will continue to press ahead to achieve its disaster risk reduction commitments and targets.

- This determination is now being refined to incorporate disaster risk reduction into the core of our country's economic growth strategy.
- In this way, we will protect the lives and interests of our citizens, 82% of whom live in townships along our coastline, as well as the parts of our two Cities that touch our coastal waters.
- I look forward to the remainder of this consultative process, as we share our experiences and develop each other's capacity to respond to our common national risks.
- Thank You.

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**Minister of Local Government and Community Development**  
**Jamaica**

