



Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries

Greetings by Minister J.C. Hutchinson

**Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture
and Fisheries**

at the Bamboo and Rattan Congress 2018 in Beijing, China

Monday, June 25, 2018

Salutations....

- Master of Ceremony
- Director General Dr. Hanz Friederich
- The media
- Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning....

Bamboo, one of the world's fastest growing plants and a rapidly renewable source of fibre, is a multi-purpose non-timber forest resource, which today supports value chains across the world worth approximately US\$60 billion per year.

In recent years, innovations in bamboo processing have seen bamboo become a legally approved building material across the Andean countries of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, while industrial development in Asia has resulted in domestic bamboo sectors in countries such as India and China growing in value to US\$4 billion and US\$32 billion, respectively. However, despite these advances, today, bamboo in the Caribbean is heavily underutilized.

Recognizing this and the considerable bamboo resources in Jamaica and the other nations of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), we see bamboo helping the region to:

- Reduce poverty and promote green growth;
- Develop increased regional and international trade and investment;
- Restore degraded lands and reduce vulnerability to natural disasters.
- Attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as enunciated by the United Nations.

With over 60,000 hectares of bamboo mixed with other vegetation that was growing in an “unmanaged” way, we recognised that with the use of standards, Jamaica could control the growth of bamboo in the same way we control the growth of sugar cane, for example. We would then have a sustainable material that could go into the production of items such as “activated bamboo carbon”.

Recognizing the potential benefits that can be accrued to the country by the utilization of bamboo the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries decided that we needed to move the industry beyond the offering of a limited number of tourist craft items towards the development and commercialization of new bamboo products incorporating standards. The Ministry gave the responsibility for developing this market-led standards-driven industry to the Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ).

As a first step towards the development of our fledgling bamboo industry, we ensured that Jamaica became the 38th member of the International Organization for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) in 2012. INBAR has since grown to 42 members.

After joining INBAR, Jamaica took steps to develop the industry with a focus on four promising value chains:

- Bamboo charcoal and charcoal products
- Bamboo pulp, paper, packaging materials and textiles
- Bamboo building and furniture

- Edible bamboo shoots and consumables.

These bamboo value chains gave us the road map for our bamboo standardization process. This road map has been guided by information received through our membership in INBAR, of which Jamaica held the chairmanship between November 2014 and November 2017.

The advances we have made in developing the bamboo industry have included:

- the development of a curriculum for the National Vocational Qualification of Jamaica (NVQJ) in bamboo technology, which was facilitated by a lead group of persons trained in China. This curriculum is now available at our National Council on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (NCTVET) for use in tertiary institutions;
- training of over 100 persons, including 80 young persons (18-35 years) in bamboo preservation and the development of high quality bamboo by-products;
- formation of the Bamboo Industry Association of Jamaica (BIAJ) in 2015. Members of this association have been trained in China and have been contributing to the bamboo development process; and the
- production and export of over 85,000lbs of bamboo charcoal to the USA, Cayman Islands and St Maarten.

To demonstrate and also promote the use of bamboo, a bamboo-reinforced concrete house was constructed and displayed at our major agricultural and food show in 2014. In addition, we have developed some 14 prototypes for various bamboo by-products, including a charcoal kiln, charcoal for cooking purposes, charcoal water filter, lumber, ketchup, stylus for smartphones and tablet computers, body wash, soaps, and stretcher for carrying sick persons – some of these items are sold locally.

Through a collaborative arrangement involving the Bureau of Standards Jamaica and two of our universities - University of Technology Jamaica and the University of the West Indies - and private sector organizations, research and development activities are being executed with the aim of developing new standards for bamboo in construction, which may be incorporated into the application documents for our national building code. This will ensure the sustainable building of attractive low and middle income houses and tourist cabins.

The Bamboo in Construction Working Group has developed a concept paper for the improvement of the 4km of beautifully-arched Holland Bamboo Grove in St. Elizabeth, using the standards developed by the Bamboo Products Standards Technical Committee of the Bureau of Standards Jamaica. Holland Bamboo Grove (also known as Bamboo Avenue), which dates back to the 1700s, is a heritage site and one of our tourist attractions, which is said to be the most photographed place in the island.

Also, in response to the need for alternative packaging to Styrofoam and plastics, the technical committee recently completed work for the introduction of 34 Jamaican standards for the pulp, paper and packaging industries.

INBAR and the BSJ are now collaborating on the execution of a Caribbean International Bamboo Symposium to be held at the Jamaica Conference Centre in Kingston from November 27 to 29, 2018 under the theme ***'Bamboo: An Economic High 'Value Chain' Resource for the Caribbean'***.

The new bamboo industry is now a potentially lucrative “playfield” for innovators and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) with low risk for bankers who can now support entrepreneurs with confidence that those monies will be repaid.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are on the journey to use bamboo to create wealth for Jamaicans while mitigating the impact of climate change. In this regard, we would like to express our gratitude to INBAR and the Government of China for the invaluable assistance that has been provided so far and we look forward to continued collaborations as together we grow the global bamboo industry.

Thank you.