



Hon. Anthony Hylton MP
Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce
Opening Remarks

for
NATIONAL WORKSHOP “VALIDATING ROADMAPS FOR IMPROVING JAMAICA’S
TRADE ENVIRONMENT”
6th Floor Air Jamaica Building, Harbour Street
Thursday, 14 May 2015 at 9:35am

Salutations:

- Mrs. Patricia Francis, Chairperson, Trade Facilitation Task Force
- Major (Rtr) Richard Reese, Commissioner of Customs, Jamaica Customs Agency
- Mr. Bill Gain, Lead Investment Climate Trade and Logistics, World Bank
- Mr. Rajesh Aggarwal, Chief Business and Trade Policy, International Trade Centre
- Mr. Victor Cummings, Trade Administrator/ CEO, Trade Board Limited
- Representatives of the public and private sectors
- Member of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen... good morning

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this Trade Facilitation Workshop titled “Validating Roadmaps for Improving Jamaica’s Trade Environment”. Trade Facilitation speaks directly to the competitiveness of our country and businesses in Jamaica. I am, therefore, pleased to see representatives here today from the spectrum of the business community, international organisations and the public sector.

Over the next two days you will assess the analysis done by the International Trade Centre (ITC) of the over 18 studies completed on Trade Facilitation in Jamaica. The ITC analysis has identified targeted reforms to achieve effective and efficient trade facilitation, which is a critical step in moving towards the creation of an improved trade facilitation regime and a more competitive Jamaica.

In this regard, I must commend Mrs. Patricia Francis and Major (Rtr.) Richard Reese, the chair and co- chair respectively of the Trade Facilitation Task Force (TF 2), and their team for working assiduously to make this workshop a reality. However, this is just the beginning as based on the recommendations made by you as stakeholders over the next two days, a detailed implementation plan will be developed. This plan will outline the steps to put into effect the recommendations made at this workshop.

Ladies and gentlemen, the dynamics of global trade has changed. Today, industry is dependent on global value and supply chains underlined by the principle of “globalisation of production”. This means that products are assembled with inputs from different countries to allow for reduced production and transportation costs, while responding to the demands and growing standards of global consumers. It is only through trade facilitation that countries are able to benefit from this new arrangement in global production and remain competitive and open to international investment. This reality, therefore, becomes of increased importance when viewed through the prism of the Logistics Hub Initiative.

I have often stated that the Logistics Hub Initiative must be based on a series of integrated policies and programmes. Improving the business environment is one such critical policy, of which trade facilitation is an important element.

Ladies and gentlemen, effective trade facilitation pivots on the principles of ease, transparency and predictability. However, for these principles to guide our current trade facilitation mechanisms, changes must be made. We must improve transparency and efficiency of our cross border procedures, strengthen the efficiency of maritime operations, and improve the competitive offerings of our Special Economic Zones.

Indeed, these changes begin with the coordination and agreement of priorities through public and private sector dialogue such as this validation workshop. At each turn, the effort to implement these changes may be difficult but they are essential.

Ladies and gentlemen, we all stand to gain from making the process of trade easier.

As a Government, we will gain from more efficient border procedures which allow us to process more goods and improve control of fraud, thus increasing revenue. We will also be able to enhance market access through trusted systems and reduce delays in getting products to markets and consumers.

At this juncture, I want to point out that implementation of the Single Trade Electronic Window is an urgent priority of the Government to provide the mechanism to improve trade facilitation. The Jamaica Customs Agency has already begun the implementation of the ASYCUDA World System and the revised Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Programme. These are integral to the broader initiative to put in place an environment that can serve the needs of all stakeholders in the trading community. Indeed, facilitating trade acts as a catalyst for investment, which is indispensable to achieving the objectives of the growth agenda.

The benefit to the business community is the reduced delivery time of products to international consumers, which contributes to the improved competitiveness of Jamaican businesses. And, consumers gain by not having to pay for lengthy border delays.

Ladies and gentlemen, all these benefits will culminate in an improved ranking for Jamaica in various international business indices and in the increased investor profile for our country as the place of choice to live, work and do business.

In closing, I want to thank the International Trade Centre for reviewing over 18 studies and reports prepared in the area of Trade Facilitation in Jamaica and putting together

their conclusions and recommendations in such a comprehensive manner. I must also thank the World Bank for sponsoring this workshop to facilitate dialogue as we seek to find a way forward.

To the attendees, I wish you a very successful workshop and I look forward to receiving the conclusions, which I hope will include further coordination of priorities across the public and the private sector.

I hereby declare the workshop officially open!

I thank you