



MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, AGRICULTURE & FISHERIES

**Speech Delivered by
Honourable Audley Shaw, CD, MP
Minister of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries
Official Launch – Jamaica Trade Information Portal
Venetian Suite, Terra Nova Hotel, Kingston
Thursday, May 16, 2019
9:30 am**

Salutations:

- Colleague Minister, Hon. Floyd Green
- Mr. Dermon Spence, (Actg) Permanent Secretary Ministry of Industry
Commerce, Agriculture & Fisheries (MICAf)
- Mr. Wayne O. Robertson, Principal Director Modernization Programme
Implementation, Office of the Cabinet
- Mrs. Patricia Francis, Chairperson, Trade Facilitation Task Force
- Mr. Roberto Azevêdo, Director General, World Trade Organisation (WTO)
- Rev. Delroy Coley, Senior Director Strategic Planning Division, MICAf
- Mr. Lloyd Distant Jr, President, Jamaica Chamber of Commerce
- Ms. Judith Green, Principal Investment Officer and Head, English Speaking
Caribbean, International Finance Corporation (IFC)
- Mr. Douglas Webster, Trade Administrator, Trade Board Ltd.
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

I must say how pleased I am to be a part of the official launch of this significant tool in our quest to enhance our trading landscape in Jamaica. The ***Jamaica Trade Information Portal (JTIP)*** will undoubtedly make it much easier for our local and international business interests and partners to move valuable goods and services and, in doing so, add value to our economy. This Portal, ladies and gentlemen, is indicative of our strong and clear commitment to improving Jamaica's business environment!

I must also pause to acknowledge our partners in this effort – ***the World Bank Group***. The World Bank Group has strongly supported Jamaica in its Trade Facilitation Reform through its Trade Facilitation Support Programme.

The role of the private sector must also be recognized. Today is truly a demonstration of the fruit of our collective labour and is reflective of the type of partnership the Government of Jamaica embraces to drive economic growth and development. I am indeed heartened by your contribution.

Our commitment to enhancing the business environment is further solidified by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between

the MDAs which are custodians of the information shared on the portal and the Trade Broad Limited, which has charge of the Portal.

The Government of Jamaica is quite seized of the importance of making it easier to do business, with our Prime Minister, the Honourable Andrew Holness also acknowledging the strides being made in this regard.

The Jamaica Trade Information Portal further represents Jamaica's efforts to fulfill its commitment to the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement, under Article I - which speaks to making information available through the internet.

Ladies and gentlemen, with the Trade Information Portal, Jamaica will have a single authoritative trade information source for businesses to easily access the information they need at any time.

The portal will bring export and import-related regulatory information and step-by-step guidance on a single platform to allow traders, investors and consumers a smoother interface with the regulatory and procedural steps needed to facilitate their businesses, ultimately driving our collective economic growth.

Points:

Ladies and gentlemen, the government has been strident in its commitment to improving our competitiveness, recognizing that this is pivotal to our social and economic growth. This recognition translates into not only the need to implement far-reaching reforms but to also implementing these reforms quicker than other countries that are on a similar path.

How are we doing?

The World Bank Doing Business Report 2019 indicated that, even though Jamaica achieved a positive absolute score – increasing from 66.92 to 67.47 – our overall ranking declined by 5 points from 70th to 75th. As it pertains to trading across borders, notwithstanding our ongoing efforts, that indicator declined in ranking from 130 to 134. This means we have a lot of work ahead.

Initiatives such as the Jamaica Trade Information Portal show that we are on our way to improving this standing. I therefore urge us all to ensure that the value of the Portal is swiftly channeled into the wider Trade Facilitation Reform Programme so our traders and businesses can leverage its provisions.

Other Initiatives:

As you are aware ladies and gentlemen, the JTIP forms part of the wider trade facilitation initiatives of the government. The ***Jamaica Electronic Single Window (ESW) for Trade*** being implemented by the Jamaica Customs Agency in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service, is another such initiative that will also result in greater efficiency through reducing the registration and application turnaround times, cost savings and better use of resources, among others.

The ESW will indeed be a game changer for our trading environment, as approximately 20 Border Agencies will be integrated into a single platform. The integration of the Trade Board Limited into the Single Window has already commenced, with key MICAFA agencies to follow suit, namely the Plant Quarantine Division, the Veterinary Services Division and the National Compliance Regulatory Authority, in short order.

Legislative Reform:

Ladies and gentlemen, our quest to improve the platform for trade will fall flat if certain other elements, such as our legislative agenda, are not brought in line with the prevailing global trends and our current needs.

Jamaica must bring its trade-related laws into the 21st Century. Currently and unbelievably, we have laws which are dated 1945 regulating our trade. Thus, the repeal and replacement of the Customs Act is a pivotal step in this direction.

Through the Technical Committee on Legislative Review, our ability to respond with current legislation to the demands of new sectors, such as nutraceuticals and cannabis, is a signal of a forward-thinking approach to creating a conducive and business-friendly environment, allowing us to truly compete on a global scale.

Removal of Import/Export Licencing Requirements by Trade Board:

We have made some headway in this regard. I am pleased to inform that the Trade Board has removed the licensing requirement for over 14 products.

This move also forms a part of the Ministry's work, through the Trade Facilitation Task Force, to gradually reduce the unnecessary and burdensome 'red-tape' associated with regulatory compliance in the trading environment and is also being undertaken within the context of our commitment under the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA),

to reduce the overall time and cost to trade, creating a more agile business and trading environment.

Upgrading of Laboratories and Resources:

We have also improved the capacity of our labs for the testing of goods for exports. This will create a positive impact on product standards through this crucial support to our exporters. Inspectors in the Veterinary Service Division have also been provided with 84 Surface Pro tablets, allowing for faster turn-around times in the inspection and release of goods as well as greater communication amongst Border Regulatory Agencies (BRAs), customs and the traders.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are on a path of improving the approach taken in inspecting goods at the ports with our BRAs working towards a closer collaboration to reduce the time for these inspections to be completed.

Close:

In closing, I want to, once again, thank all our partners for the effort placed in bringing this JTIP to reality. I want to especially thank the World Bank and the consultants from the Ecorys/Lumin Consortium for steering the project and for their unrelenting drive to ensuring that the ball was carried to the launch line! Thank you!