

Remarks

Senator the Hon. Aubyn Hill
Minister of Industry, Investment and
Commerce

Signing of Memorandum of Understanding
(MOU)

Jamaica Stock Exchange (JSE)
Jamaica Manufacturers Association (JMEA)

Thursday, March 24, 2022

10:00am

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Jamaica Stock Exchange
40 Harbour Street Kingston

Salutations:

- **Master of Ceremony** - Mr. Andre Gooden, Group Business Development Manager, JSE
- Dr. Marlene Street Forrest – Managing Director, JSE
- Mr. John Mahfood - President of the Jamaica Manufacturers and Exporters Association
- Miss Andrea Kelly – General Manager JCSD and JCSD Trustees Services
- Ms. Chorvelle Johnson Cunningham – CEO, Sagicor Bank Jamaica Limited
- Mr. Jerome Miles – General Manager, Rainforest Seafood
- Miss Kareema Muncey – JMEA Member, Owner Home Choice Enterprise Ltd
- Ms. Pauline Mighty - Managing Director, Mighty Spice Jamaica Limited
- Mr. Gordon Dempster / Ms. Kristina Dempster - Cofounders, Outland Hurders Creamery & Farmstead
- Ms. Shelly Heaven - CEO & Co-Founder, FarmLink Limited
- Ms. Sherrica Hall - McKenley & Associates Chartered Accountants
- Ms. Paula Hagley - Business Development & Projects Consultant
- Other JMEA Members
- Media Practitioners
- Ladies and gentlemen

I am pleased to be part of this event, as the JSE and the JMEA come together to formalise an arrangement that will benefit the SME sector in particular, and the Jamaican economy overall. Small and Medium-sized Businesses (SMEs) are a vital part of any modern economy. They account for the majority of businesses worldwide, and according to the World Bank, globally, they represent about 90% of businesses and employ more than 50% of the world's workforce.

These are often the industries that are most vulnerable to external shocks. The Covid-19 pandemic reinforced that fact. Though we are almost 10,000 km away, we are feeling the effects

of the war in Ukraine, in the rising prices for commodities such as fuel, fertilizer and food. There is worldwide disruption as the global supply chain and logistics distribution arrangements experience great strain. Businesses must now look locally and regionally to provide products that would normally be imported from farther afield.

Research shows that access to capital is the second most cited obstacle as entrepreneurs seek to grow their businesses in emerging markets and developing countries. This partnership with the JSE and the JMEA is therefore very timely. For the long-term survival of this sector, companies should be listed on the Jamaica Stock Exchange to allow them access to necessary equity capital.

It is important to underscore that not one of the businesses listed on the stock market folded during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is due to several key factors:

- good corporate governance
- the company's ability to pivot during this period
- availability of additional equity funding or loans at much cheaper rates than what other companies which are not listed on the stock market would pay.

With this MOU, we are inviting and expecting more companies to be listed on the stock market. Such listing will help to stimulate growth in the economy and foster greater employment.

I take this opportunity to say to our business people, our manufacturers and our exporters - we should not only be looking at our Jamaican market of under 3 million people. We should be looking at the regional markets in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Let us also look at the Diaspora market. We estimate that there are over three million people in the Jamaican Diaspora. They are already familiar with our products and services, making it a much easier market in which to sell our products and services. Taking advantage of these regional and diaspora markets will allow us to earn hard currency to support the Jamaican dollar.

I encourage the JMEA to help Jamaica to diversify and produce more goods and services for the export market.

The JSE exists to mobilize capital and give access to capital. What is needed are ready participants, ready entrepreneurs and ready businesses, to access this capital. This government is a reliable, strong and committed supporter of the Junior Market. The Andrew Holness Administration maintained the tax incentive for the Junior Market when there was an unequivocal decision to remove it.

I sincerely commend Dr. Street-Forrest for the leadership, drive and commitment to nation building that she has displayed in guiding the quick meteoric rise of the Jamaica Stock Exchange especially in the recent past few years.

We look forward to working with the Jamaica Stock Exchange and the JMEA to grow Jamaica and diversify the economy. These are unprecedented times, but the Government of Jamaica has laid a strong foundation with policies, opportunities and agreements that enable our entrepreneurs to access key markets. As your Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce, I commit ongoing support to your efforts and the needs of the Jamaica Stock Exchange through the services offered by the 22 agencies under my portfolio.

This MOU is fully endorsed by the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce.

Thank you.

Senator the Hon. Aubyn Hill