

KINGSTON JAMAICA: 8th BIENNIAL JAMAICA DIASPORA CONFERENCE

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The 8th Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference was held in Kingston, Jamaica under the theme “**Jamaica and the Diaspora: Building Pathways for Sustainable Development**.” The event took place at the Jamaica Conference Centre, June 16-20, 2019.

The conference convened by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (MFAFT) is a hallmark event and a global forum that connects Jamaicans from all over the world to collaborate and share dialog and strategies that will assist Jamaica towards achieving first world status in the year 2030. The global Jamaican Diaspora is generally recognized as the USA, UK and Canada representing a population of greater than 5 million. Each group was at the forefront on panel discussions covering topics on Education and Training, Economic Growth and Job Creation, Crime Prevention, Health and Wellness, Agriculture, Immigration, Trade and Investment.



The Most Hon. Andrew P. Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica addresses the Opening Ceremony audience at the 8th Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference. June 16, 2019, Kingston,

The global Jamaican Diaspora contributes greater than 40% towards Jamaica’s GDP, and the Jamaican government has made great strides in its efforts to harness the power of the Diaspora. A central strategic component of the conference was the introduction and establishment of a **National Diaspora Policy**. The National Diaspora Policy seeks to align the interests of the Jamaican government with its Diaspora and seeks input from the Diaspora to address their areas of concern thereby enabling collaboration Jamaica’s National Development Plan, Vision 2030. The Biennial conference seeks to establish specific actionable outcomes to which Jamaica and its Diaspora will commit to implement after the Conference.

Jamaica's Prime Minister, Andrew P. Holness made very specific references on the importance of the Diaspora during his opening ceremony remarks. He called for Diaspora involvement in all aspects of national development and sought to strengthen ties that would yield greater political influence in areas such as correspondent banking and other trade and investments opportunities beneficial towards Jamaica's objectives.

The conference featured a **Marketplace** exposition of Jamaican goods and services. It included a **Government At Your Service** booth, which represented a fast-track one-stop central location at the conference where Diasporans could get personal business transactions such as paying property taxes or getting a TRN# or a passport renewed in one day.



The conference concluded with a **Diaspora Day of Service** with a range of activities occurring across the island on June 20, that encourages Jamaican organizations and individuals to volunteer their time, skills and resources to individual and community projects.

Delegates of US Diaspora organizations present at the conference included

members of the West Indian Social Club of Hartford, Inc., the Institute of Caribbean Studies (ICS), and the National Association of Jamaican and Supportive Organizations (NAJASO). The Institute of Caribbean Studies along with Authentic Caribbean Foundation (Boston, Mass) and Advocacy2Legacy (Hartford, Conn.) are currently working with JAMPRO to hold a Trade, Investment and Tourism forum in Hartford, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Boston and New York. This forum which has been scheduled for November 2019 is a direct result of the contacts made and the discussions held at the conference and represents the actionable outcomes previously described for Jamaica and its Diaspora. This forum will bring Caribbean Ambassadors, investors, brand Jamaica, and Caribbean distributors to the New England region. Minister Audley Shaw, Minister of Industry Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries (MICAF) expressed his intent to attend the upcoming Trade and Investment forum in Hartford. The regional JAMPRO office in New York working with Hartford area community activists report directly to his Ministry in Jamaica.