

GLOBAL JAMAICA DIASPORA COUNCIL

A Model for Deeper Partnership between Jamaica and the Diaspora

The establishment of the Global Jamaica Diaspora Council represents another ground breaking initiative for the development of a more effective process of engagement between the Diaspora and Jamaica. The concept of the Council evolved from discussions with the existing Diaspora Advisory Board (DAB) and among other stakeholders, including the Economic Growth Council (EGC), who all agreed that there needed to be expansion of engagement within the Diaspora to include new and emerging regions where Jamaicans reside.

It will be recalled that the Advisory Board emanated from the first Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference in 2004. Members were drawn from the three traditional Diaspora destination countries -Canada, United Kingdom and the United States of America. Its original terms of reference stated "The primary function of the Board is to advise the Minister with responsibility for the Jamaican Overseas Community on issues relating to the Diaspora".

The Board has therefore since its establishment served as an advisory body to the Minister with portfolio responsibility for Diaspora Affairs and serves as one method of coordination of Diaspora engagement.

The Board has never functioned as a forum for Diaspora representation to the Government of Jamaica. This point was even reinforced in several meetings of the current Board in July 2017 and January 2018, where all Members participated in the review and revision of the Terms of Reference. Members also agreed to play a pivotal role in apprising their respective communities of the mandate of the Board, to dispel misunderstandings which appeared to have arisen among a few individuals.

With the transformation and deepening of the Diaspora-Jamaica relationship over 15 years since the Diaspora Advisory Board was established, global developments have drawn attention to the presence and influence of a growing Jamaican Diaspora community in other regions and countries across the globe. Furthermore, meetings with Jamaican communities across the world in non-traditional Diaspora locations continuously express a desire to be included in the mainstream Diaspora engagement activities.

It had become clear that there was need to review the structure of the Diaspora Advisory Board to accommodate a more inclusive and synergistic

approach to Diaspora engagement. This was further underscored in the meeting of the Board in early January of this year. Subsequently, all Board members from the three countries were invited to submit ideas and inputs for the creation of a new structure. It was on this basis therefore, that the Ministry prepared a Concept Note to guide discussion on the process and thereafter, the Terms of Reference for the evolution of the DAB into a wider body.

The Global Jamaica Diaspora Council is undoubtedly a more inclusive and expanded mechanism for deeper and wider collaboration among and within the Jamaican Diaspora. The major components of the Council are based on the revised Terms of Reference of the Diaspora Advisory Board which had been agreed in January 2018.

Membership of the Council will comprise 28 members, which provides for global representation as well as expertise to be drawn from principal social and economic development sectors. That breadth of representation is absent from the TOR of the current Diaspora Advisory Board.

The new Council will include Diasporans from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Caribbean, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East. It will further consist of Diasporans with a high level of proficiency in the following sectors: Education, Citizen Security, Health and Wellness, the Arts, Sports and Culture, the Faith-based Community, Development Issues and Commerce.

Young people between the ages of 18 and 35 years will also form part of this new engagement structure, holding 7 seats, as they are critical to the sustainability of the Diaspora Movement. It is worth noting that the youth are far advanced in setting up the parallel Global Jamaica Diaspora Youth Council, which serves to increase their affinity to and involvement with Jamaica.

With respect to the term of office, members will now serve for three years, compared with tenure of two years for the Diaspora Advisory Board. This longer term of office will allow members more time to achieve the agreed deliverables during their tenure. Another key feature of the Council is the Code of Conduct which was not included in the original terms of reference elaborated in 2004, but had been included in the January 2018 TOR. This will lead to greater transparency and accountability of members. These are all recommendations that emanated from the current Members of the Diaspora Advisory Board.

**PRINCIPAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DIASPORA ADVISORY BOARD
AND THE GLOBAL JAMAICA DIASPORA COUNCIL**

DIASPORA ADVISORY BOARD

**GLOBAL JAMAICA
DIASPORA COUNCIL**

**TOTAL
MEMBERSHIP**

• 14 MEMBERS



• 28 MEMBERS

• 14 ELECTED MEMBERS

- 7 MEMBERS
Canada
United Kingdom
United States of America

- 7 YOUTH LEADERS
Canada
United Kingdom
United States of America



• 14 ELECTED

- 7 MEMBERS
Canada
United Kingdom
United States of America

- 7 YOUTH LEADERS
Canada
United Kingdom
United States of America



• 6 NEW REGIONAL MEMBERS

- Africa
Asia & the Pacific
Caribbean
Latin America
Middle East
Europe excluding UK



• 7 NEW SECTOR-BASED MEMBERS

- Education
Health
Arts, Sports & Culture
Citizen Security
Development Issues
Faith-based
Commerce

• 1 DISCRETIONARY MEMBER

TENURE

• 2 Years



• 3 Years

MAIN ROLE

• Advisory body to the Minister on all issues which impact the Diaspora



• Advisory and consultative body to create pathways for increased engagement with and involvement of the Jamaican Diaspora

The principal role and function of the Global Jamaica Diaspora Council is to create pathways for increased engagement with and involvement of the Jamaican Diaspora. Additionally, it will also function as a platform, among others to be established, to implement the strategies outlined in the draft National Diaspora Policy. Indeed, the Council provides for a more expansive role for the Diaspora. This includes opportunities for their involvement at the policy level across several sectors of Jamaica's development, as well as in respect of matters affecting the well-being of the Diaspora in the countries where they reside.

In June of this year, the incumbent Diaspora Advisory Board Members approved the framework of the Council. In order to facilitate a smooth transition to the Council, all Board Members agreed on June 16 to an extension of their tenure for six months. During the DAB meeting, the Board Members also agreed to a specific timeframe for the transition to be effected. That is, by the end of this year. This included agreement to hold elections for new Council Members before the end of the transition period. To that end, it was understood that members of the Diaspora Advisory Board would assist in the establishment of Elections Committees to manage the elections of (elected) Council Members in the USA, Canada and the UK.

It is also significant to note that attendees at the 8th Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference held in June this year, issued a clear mandate by their endorsement of the framework for the establishment of the Council. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade is committed to driving the process of expanding and deepening the Diaspora Movement and its meaningful partnerships with Jamaica. This is a clear desire and mandate issued by Jamaican communities across the world and endorsed by the June 2019 Conference. The young people have forged ahead and we should harness this energy for the greater good.

We look forward to expanding the voices heard across the Diaspora, and leveraging their power, influence, talents and skills for the mutual benefits to the movement and national development.