

Speech for Hon. Ian Hayles, M.P.
Minister of State in the Ministry of
Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change
at the
Climate Change Policy Framework and Action Plan Public Consultation
for Stakeholder Feedback and White Paper Submission
@ 9:30 a.m.
on Wednesday, February 19, 2014
@
The Wexford Court Hotel, Montego Bay

Greetings and salutations. A very good morning to everyone.

First, let me take this opportunity to extend best wishes for a productive consultation on this important national policy, that is, the Climate Change Policy Framework and Action Plan (Green Paper). Unfortunately, Minister Pickersgill is unable to join us today due to other work-related commitments.

However he participated in the consultation held last Friday in Port Maria for stakeholders from the parishes of St, Mary, St, Ann and Portland, and he will be participating in the final scheduled stakeholder consultation which will be held in Kingston on February 20 for participants in Kingston and St. Andrew, St. Catherine and St. Thomas.

It was only two weeks ago that I chaired the Drought Management Committee at my Ministry, where the key public sector agencies, including the Meteorological Service, the National Water Commission and the Water Resources Authority discussed the issue of access to water for residential, agricultural and other economic activities during the dry season. I must point out here that we are now in the dry period, and severe drought conditions have been forecast for western Jamaica in particular.

Water conservation, rainwater harvesting, improved efficiencies in the delivery and storage systems, and the protection of watersheds are all outlined in Water Sector Policy and the Rainwater harvesting Policy.

This issue of less rainfall particularly in the dry season for many regions is one of the manifestations of climate change.

Our ability, as a country, to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change which include sea level rise, higher temperatures, an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, as well as my Ministry's responsibility to coordinate national actions, through the Climate Change Division, to deal with climate change and its impacts, are some the issues that the draft Climate Change Policy Framework and Action Plan seeks to address.

The Climate Change Policy Framework and Action Plan (Green Paper 2013/1) was tabled in the Houses of Parliament by Minister Pickersgill in November 2013. It has been circulated to varying stakeholders, including Parish Libraries, the Association of Parish Development Committees, Parish Councils, community based organizations and non-governmental organizations for comments.

The document is also posted on my Ministry's website as well as that of the National Environment and Planning Agency. The team has also distributed hard copies, as well as CDs of the draft Policy. This is in an effort to get all stakeholders sensitized to the concept of climate change and its possible impacts of the quality of life of present and future generations of Jamaican, and also to allow public participation in the finalization of this important national policy.

Today's consultation is the third in a series of four public consultations on the policy. The Ministry has held meetings in Port Maria, St. Mary; Santa Cruz, St. Elizabeth; and will be hosting the last meeting in Kingston tomorrow in-keeping with government guidelines.

Based on the projections in the State of the Jamaican Climate Report, western parishes will have longer dry periods. Given the projected impacts, it is therefore important that the stakeholders in the west and north-west indicate by active participation in the consultation today, their concerns about the environment and more specifically climate change.

With that said, I implore the participants of this meeting to engage the panelists in a lively discussion so that we can gather meaningful feedback on this policy. I must add that Jamaica is one of the few countries in the Caribbean to be developing a climate change policy.

Ladies and gentlemen, global climate change is one of the most important challenges to sustainable development that we face as a region in the 21st century.

Make no mistake about it, climate change will impact, and have serious implications for all sectors.

Climate change stressors pose very serious risks for our critically endangered ecosystems, and vulnerable sectors including, but not limited to agriculture, forestry, health, local economies, tourism and biodiversity. However, it should be noted that the impact will not be uniform across all sectors.

It is predicted that we will have a 1.5°C - 3.5°C rise in temperature by the end of the 21st century globally. This will lead to the melting of glacial ice in Greenland and the North Pole, thereby influencing a rise in sea level. This rise in sea level will render low-lying coastal areas useless, as these areas will be covered in water. In the Jamaican context, Kingston, Portland Cottage, Annotto Bay, Port Maria, Black River, Negril and Savanna-La-Mar are the likely areas to be impacted first by sea level rise.

The 2012 State of the Jamaican Climate Report concluded that Jamaica's mean annual temperature is projected to increase across all climate scenarios by 1.10 to 3.2°C by the 2090s. The range of increase is from 0.7°C to 1.8°C by the 2050s and from 1.0 to 3.0°C by the 2080s.

Financial and technical assistance from international, regional, national and local organizations/groups have helped persons mostly in rural areas to mitigate and adapt to climate change through varying programmes. These programmes have assisted in the development of more resilient livelihoods.

The climate change activities implemented thus far are too numerous for me to mention, but I especially want to commend the rainwater harvesting and water conservation activities, as water is essential for life on earth.

Clean energy development through the implementation of solar panels and wind turbines as well as other sources of renewable energy are important in reducing our dependence on fossil fuels as the main source of energy.

I am particularly pleased, that community groups have taken a keen interest in applying for and implementing community projects. The recent 19th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC), highlighted challenges relating to climate financing for developing countries especially Small Island Developing States (SIDS), such as Jamaica.

Indeed, the cost to implement measures to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate will be a challenge for developing countries such as ours.

It should be noted that Jamaica applied to the Adaptation Fund in 2012, and received approximately USD\$10 million to carry out shoreline restoration in Negril, irrigation and capacity building activities in Clarendon and other parishes. These types of grants are essential to the achievement of the country's climate change objectives under the Vision 2030 Jamaica National Development Plan the overarching goal of which is to make "Jamaica, the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business".

This Climate Change Policy Framework and Action Plan is intended primarily to support the goals of Vision 2030 by reducing the risks posed by climate change to Jamaica's economic and social sectors and to its development goals. It outlines the strategies that the country will employ in order to effectively respond to the impacts and challenges of climate change, through measures which are appropriate for varying scales and magnitudes of climate change impacts.

Going forward, there have been renewed calls for vulnerable groups such as the disabled, the elderly, children and women to be more protected from the risks posed by hazard events.

Groupings such as fishermen and small farmers have also been identified as those that will be in the frontline of impacts from climate change. In this regard, the Ministry, with support from the recently concluded GOJ-EU-UNEP Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction Project, undertook several awareness-raising interventions for the disabled community, fishermen and farmers' groups across the island on the impacts of climate change.

Access to resources and information on climate change and its impacts that will be vital to overcoming the challenges may not always be available. A number of awareness and capacity building programmes have been created and implemented to increase access to such information.

In closing, I ask that we commit ourselves to accepting the challenge of fighting climate change and to continue the programmes and projects that have already begun. Remember, together we can achieve.

Thank you, and I wish for you all, a very productive consultation,