

SPECIAL ISSUE

SECTORAL DEBATE PRESENTATION 2025/2026 • JUNE 17, 2025

TOURISM

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MINISTRY OF TOURISM



THRIVE IN 2025:
LINKING TOURISM TO
EVERY JAMAICAN'S
SUCCESS

Hon. Edmund
BARTLETT
OJ, CD, MP, LLD (Hon)
MINISTER OF TOURISM



**STRATEGIC MARKET
DIVERSIFICATION SUCCESS**

**TOURISM LINKAGES NETWORK:
CONNECTING EVERY SECTOR**

**EMPOWERING HUMAN CAPITAL THROUGH
COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT**



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MINISTRY OF TOURISM

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SECTORAL DEBATE PRESENTATION 2025/2026

**Hon. Edmund Bartlett, OJ, CD, MP, LLD
(Hon)**

Minister of Tourism

Gordon House, Kingston

June 17, 2025

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THEME:

**“Thrive in 2025; Linking Tourism to Every Jamaican’s
Success”**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Madam Speaker, Most Honourable Prime Minister, esteemed colleagues in this Honourable House, distinguished guests, and the people of Jamaica:

When a visitor steps onto Jamaican soil, they do not merely arrive at a destination, they step into a vibrant, living story. A story composed of our culture's rhythm, our heritage's depth, and, above all, the radiant warmth of our people.

Today, I rise not only to report on the progress of the Ministry of Tourism for the financial year 2024/25 and to present our plans for 2025/26, but also to reaffirm a core principle that has guided our work from the outset: tourism must be for all Jamaicans. It must be a catalyst for community development, a driver of enterprise, and a platform upon which dreams become reality.

To my beloved wife Carmen and to our family, thank you for your enduring strength and love that sustains me through the demanding schedule of building Jamaica's tourism future. Above all, I give thanks to Almighty God for His continued grace and guidance, for it is only through His blessing that we have achieved what many thought impossible just a few short years ago.

I express sincere gratitude to the Most Honourable Prime Minister, Dr. Andrew Holness. His steadfast leadership and strategic vision have enabled our tourism industry to recover, grow, and excel on the global stage in ways that continue to astound international observers. To my

Cabinet colleagues, I thank you for your unwavering support as we work tirelessly to integrate tourism within the broader national development framework that will transform Jamaica for generations to come.

I extend deep appreciation to my Minister of State, Senator the Hon. Delano Seiveright and our Permanent Secretary Jennifer Griffith, whose administrative excellence has been the backbone of our ministry's operations.

To the Ministry team, boards, executive management and staff of our public bodies, I thank you for your governance and strategic oversight that ensures every dollar invested in tourism development delivers maximum returns to the Jamaican people. To the Opposition Spokesperson on Tourism, Senator Janice Allen, I appreciate your constructive engagement on matters of national importance that transcend political boundaries.

And to the people of East Central St. James, your faith, partnership, and unwavering support continue to inspire my every step in this honourable chamber and beyond. Together, we have expanded scholarship opportunities for students who see tourism as their pathway to prosperity. We have implemented youth empowerment programmes that are already bearing fruit in communities across our constituency.

We have advanced critical housing developments and community upgrades delivering homes to hardworking families who form the backbone of our tourism industry. These initiatives are more than projects, they are promises kept and foundations laid for a more inclusive

future where tourism benefits reach every corner of Jamaica.

INTRODUCTION: A VISION FOR TRANSFORMATION

Madam Speaker, I want you to imagine a Jamaica where the influence of tourism is not limited to resort corridors but felt in the produce of our farmers who supply fresh callaloo to hotel kitchens, the artistry of our craftspeople whose creations adorn resort lobbies, the innovation of our entrepreneurs who develop cutting-edge tourism apps, and the aspirations of our youth who see endless possibilities in this dynamic industry.

This is more than a vision, it is a blueprint for national transformation. It is the essence of our theme: "Thrive in 2025: Linking Tourism to Every Jamaican's Success." We are not simply talking about growth in terms of visitor numbers or hotel rooms, though these remain important. We are constructing a tourism sector that is inclusive, resilient, and proudly Jamaican, a movement where every citizen from Negril's white sand beaches to Morant Point's rugged coastline can feel the pulse of opportunity generated by this vital industry.

Tourism is not a privilege for a few; it is a national asset that belongs to all of us. It is a shared opportunity that must create pathways for participation by farmers, fishermen, artisans, entertainers, technology innovators, and young entrepreneurs.

It is a collective mission that requires the active involvement of every

ministry, every agency, and every Jamaican who believes in our nation's potential.

Our approach is deliberate and multifaceted. We are working systematically to deepen cross-sectoral linkages that ensure tourism dollars circulate throughout our economy rather than leaking offshore.

We are expanding the boundaries of digital transformation and innovation, positioning Jamaica as the Caribbean's first truly smart tourism destination. We are strengthening human capital and uplifting communities through comprehensive training programmes and infrastructure investments that improve the quality of life for residents while enhancing experiences for visitors. And we are embedding resilience at every level of the tourism value chain, ensuring that our industry can weather any storm, literal or metaphorical, that may come our way.

This is our direction. This is our commitment. This is the legacy we are building for future generations of Jamaicans who will inherit a tourism industry that serves as an engine of national transformation rather than simply an economic sector.

PART I: JAMAICA'S REMARKABLE TOURISM TRANSFORMATION

A Legacy of Achievement That Speaks for Itself

Madam Speaker, when I reflect on the journey we have travelled together

over these past years, I am struck by the magnitude of transformation that Jamaica's tourism sector has undergone. We have witnessed nothing short of a renaissance, a rebirth that has seen our industry emerge stronger, smarter, and more sustainable than ever before. The last several years have seen us solidify our position as a global trailblazer in tourism resilience, innovation, and inclusion, setting standards that other destinations now seek to emulate.

Madam Speaker, allow me to highlight 25 major successes up to 2025.

1. Successful Recovery from COVID-19 – A Global Model Jamaica achieved one of the world's fastest tourism recoveries through our Tourism Recovery Task Force, Resilient Corridors hosting 800,000 visitors safely, and free online training for 8,000+ displaced workers. By 2024: 4.15 million visitor arrivals, US\$4.3 billion in earnings exceeding pre-pandemic levels, and tourism driving 10 consecutive quarters of national economic growth. Madam Speaker, this marks significant progress toward the nation's ambitious '5x5x5' growth target of securing 5 million visitors and US\$5 billion in earnings by the end of 2025.

2. Tourism Workers' Pension Scheme: World's first tourism pension scheme launched in 2022, covering workers aged 18-59 with over 10,000 members and J\$4 billion in contributions.

3. Jamaica Centre for Tourism Innovation (JCTI): Certified over 20,000 workers through internationally benchmarked certification in partnership with Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association (JHTA), HEART NSTA Trust, American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI),

and American Culinary Federation (ACF).

4. Strategic Airlift Expansion: Major new routes include LATAM non-stop from Lima, World2Fly charter flights from Lisbon, Avelo Airlines from Hartford and Raleigh, American Airlines Miami-Boscobel inaugural service, United non-stop from Denver, and Bahamasair Nassau-Montego Bay.

5. Agri-Linkages Exchange (ALEX): Digital platform linking over 2,000 small farmers directly with hotels, achieving over J\$1.2 billion in sales to date.

6. Tourism Linkages Network Expansion: Five networks covering Gastronomy, Health & Wellness, Sports & Entertainment, Shopping, and Knowledge drove deeper integration through Christmas in July, Speed networking, major event partnerships, Event Playbook workshops, Taste of Jamaica App, and Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee Festival.

7. Historic Resort Investment Surge: Over US\$3 billion invested or committed, including H10 Ocean Coral Spring (1,000+ rooms), RIU Aquarelle (753 rooms), Princess Grand & Senses (1,005 rooms), with upcoming developments from Unico, Hard Rock, Moon Palace, and others targeting 20,000 new rooms over 10 years.

8. Tourism Innovation Incubator: J\$100 million programme supporting entrepreneurs with applications growing 550% in 2024, demonstrating exceptional youth engagement.

9. EXIM Bank–TEF SMTE Loan Programme: J\$2.48 billion disbursed to 509 small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTEs), supporting resilience and business expansion.

10. Cruise Sector Rebound: Over 1.1 million cruise passengers in 2024 marking full recovery, with inaugural visits from Disney Treasure and Celebrity Ascent.

11. Worker and Community Housing Support: The Ministry of Tourism has entered into partnerships with the Ministry of Housing, the National Housing Trust and private housing developers for units in Rhyne Park Estate and Grange Pen, St. James, to be acquired by our dedicated tourism workers. We also welcome the pledge by four major international hotel investor groups, including RCD Hotels, Bahia Principe and Princess Resorts, who have committed to constructing over 2,000 residential units for industry employees combined. This includes apartments and houses for the workers and their immediate relatives.

12. Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC): Headquartered at UWI Mona with satellites in six countries, Jamaica led United Nations (UN) ratification of February 17 as Global Tourism Resilience Day and hosted two global conferences.

13. Development of Jama-Iconic Experience Landmarks: These experiences across the island continue to boost civic pride and visitor engagement.

14. Destination Assurance Framework: World's first national Destination Assurance Policy, including security audits, resort area councils, and global best practices.

15. National Beach Development Programme: Over a dozen public beaches developed or being upgraded, featuring standout facilities like Harmony Beach Park in Montego Bay.

16. Montego Bay Convention Centre Revitalization: Consistently ranked Jamaica's top Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) facility, hosting UN Tourism events, Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA), and major global meetings.

17. Carnival in Jamaica: Kingston established as global Carnival capital, generating over J\$5 billion in 2025 and attracting thousands of international revellers.

18. Urban Renewal Projects via Tourism: Artisan Village at Falmouth, Eastern Kingston Promenade, St. Thomas Destination Development Plan, and upgrades in Falmouth and Ocho Rios.

19. Airbnb and Short-Term Rental Integration: 2016 MOU led to formal sector inclusion with hosts earning J\$32 billion in 2024 via 840,000 guest stays.

20. Global Recognition and Awards Jamaica: Caribbean's Leading Destination and Global Destination of the Year. Minister Bartlett: Global Tourism Icon, Man of the Year, CHTA President's Award and RJRGLEANER Communications Group 2019 Pioneer Award.

21. Enhanced Tourism Retention Rate: Improved from 30% to 40.8% through expanded local linkages, significantly above the regional average of 10-30%.

22. Jamaica Blue Ocean Strategy Launch: Focused on product differentiation, new market creation, and frontier tourism in St. Thomas and Clarendon.

23. Tourism Entertainment Academy: Strategic investment professionalizing entertainment within tourism, certifying practitioners and developing a national entertainment blueprint for the tourism ecosystem.

24. Tourism-Driven Environmental and Heritage Projects: Mammee Bay Waterwheel restoration, Red Stripe Experience at Rick's Café, Milk River Spa revitalization, the Tourism Product Development Company's (TPDCo) Adopt-An-Area programme, and Jam-Iconic Experience expansion.

25. Spruce Up Jamaica – Community-Based Tourism Uplift: Delivered dozens of community beautification and heritage projects across all constituencies, creating temporary jobs and empowering local artisans while strengthening rural tourism appeal.

Madam Speaker, these 25 major successes demonstrate that we are transforming, innovating, and delivering! Jamaica stands as a global exemplar of what tourism can achieve when guided by vision, strategy, and inclusive purpose.

PART II: UNDERSTANDING OUR GLOBAL POSITION

The Global Tourism Landscape and Jamaica's Leadership Role

Madam Speaker, Jamaica's tourism industry continues to demonstrate exceptional resilience and robust growth even as we face global economic headwinds that have challenged industries worldwide.

UN Tourism projects international arrivals to grow between 3% and 5% compared to 2024. This cautiously optimistic outlook is predicated on favourable global economic conditions, continued inflation reduction, and the containment of geopolitical conflicts that have created uncertainty in several key source markets.

The Caribbean's Exceptional Performance

Madam Speaker, in the Caribbean's tourism tapestry, Jamaica continues to shine as one of its brightest threads. The recently released Caribbean Tourism Organization's comprehensive performance review presents a picture of remarkable regional growth that positions our area as a global leader. The Caribbean welcomed approximately 34.2 million international tourist arrivals in 2024, representing a 6.1% increase over 2023 and an impressive 6.9% rise above pre-pandemic levels.

I am proud to report that Jamaica maintained its position as the second most visited destination in the Caribbean in 2024, welcoming 2.9 million visitors. Only the Dominican Republic, received more stopover arrivals.

Together with Cuba, The Bahamas, Aruba, and Puerto Rico, our six destinations accounted for approximately 56% of all visitor arrivals to the region, demonstrating the concentration of tourism success among well-managed destinations.

Jamaica's Local Performance in Global Context

Madam Speaker, having established this global context, let me turn to Jamaica's specific performance, which demonstrates our exceptional position within both regional and international tourism markets.

As the primary driver of economic growth for our nation, tourism has consistently contributed to the robust financial health of our economy, positively impacting our net international reserves, infrastructure development, business linkages, and employment opportunities across multiple sectors.

Madam Speaker, the year 2024 presented Jamaica with a unique set of challenges that tested our resilience and adaptability. Despite maintaining our position as the Caribbean's second most visited stopover destination, our tourism sector faced numerous disruptors that would have devastated less prepared destinations.

Final arrival data for the calendar year 2024 reported 4.15 million visitors to our shores, generating estimated earnings of US\$4.3 billion. This performance represents a marginal year-over-year adjustment, with a slight reduction of 0.7% in visitor arrivals and 0.1% in earnings compared to our exceptional performance in 2023.

For proper context, Madam Speaker, it is important to note that 2023 was a year of tremendous growth for Jamaica, with an 8% increase in arrivals that exceeded all expectations. Against this high benchmark, our 2024 performance, while essentially flat, demonstrates the underlying strength of our tourism product amidst considerable global headwinds that included economic uncertainty, geopolitical tensions, travel advisories and extreme weather events.

Madam Speaker, of the 4.15 million total visitors, stopover arrivals accounted for 2.9 million, which remained relatively stable with only a 0.5% decline versus 2023. The first half of 2024 showed positive momentum, with increases in most months compared to 2023, with notable exceptions in April and June. However, the summer months of July to September registered a decline of 6.4%, resulting in the overall flat growth position for stopover arrivals by year-end.

This pattern aligns perfectly with the UN Tourism World Tourism Barometer, which indicated a more moderate recovery pace in the second half of 2024 globally, signalling a measured return of growth rates after the particularly strong 2023 performance that surprised analysts worldwide.

Strategic Market Diversification Success

Madam Speaker, analyzing our performance by source markets reveals both challenges and extraordinary opportunities that validate our strategic approach to market diversification. Our primary source market,

the United States, registered a 4.1% decline compared to 2023, largely due to economic uncertainty and election-year dynamics that typically affect American travel patterns. However, this was more than offset by robust growth from other regions that demonstrate the wisdom of our diversification strategy.

Europe, including the United Kingdom, demonstrated a commendable 9.1% increase over 2023, while Canada continued to show resilience with a 6.2% increase over the previous year. These results reflect targeted marketing investments and airlift development that are now paying dividends on increased visitor arrivals.

Madam Speaker, I am particularly pleased to highlight the success of our market diversification strategy in emerging regions. Latin America produced 13.2% more stopover arrivals for the 2024 calendar year versus 2023, while the Caribbean region generated an impressive 25.1% more stopovers compared to the previous year. These results validate our strategic focus on developing these emerging markets through enhanced airlift and targeted marketing initiatives that position Jamaica as the premier destination for regional travellers.

Central to our efforts to develop a robust airlift strategy and diversify our markets are the multi-million dollar upgrades to both the Norman Manley and Sangster International Airports. New flights to Ian Fleming International Airport and plans for our fourth international airport in Negril will also support these strategies, which are making Jamaica one of the most connected destinations in the Caribbean. These expansion efforts

will allow us to accommodate much larger planes in the future as we seek to boost visitor arrivals.

Madam Speaker, the challenges we faced in 2024 were indeed multifaceted and would have overwhelmed destinations without strong fundamentals and strategic leadership.

We confronted the lingering effects of a U.S. travel advisory that received unprecedented media coverage, Hurricane Beryl and Tropical Storm Rafael along with heavy and persistent rainfall, election year campaigning in the United States that reduced discretionary travel, high interest rates impacting consumer spending power, elevated inflation rates affecting consumer goods and travel behaviour, Boeing's continued production crisis affecting aircraft delivery to all major airlines, extreme weather and cyber occurrences that interrupted travel planning, and ongoing geopolitical crises and conflicts that created global uncertainty.

Madam Speaker, despite these significant challenges, Jamaica has maintained its prominent position in the regional tourism landscape and continues to be recognized as a premier destination by international travellers and industry professionals alike.

While we are on the subject of global challenges, we welcome the US government's decision to lift the advisory on travel to Jamaica from Level 3 to Level 2 and extend heartfelt thanks to Prime Minister Andrew Holness, whose strong leadership and skilled negotiations were instrumental in making this a reality with the support of the Minister of National Security, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang.

JTB – Celebrating a Creative and Resilient Spirit

Madam Speaker, these initiatives have been spearheaded by our marketing arm, the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB). They have been doing an excellent job of positioning Jamaica as a premier travel destination, a mission we are significantly enhancing through our strategic marketing initiatives.

We are actively elevating both our digital and traditional marketing presence, leveraging cutting-edge technologies and platforms to reach potential visitors more effectively and efficiently than ever before.

This innovative approach not only allows us to engage a wider global audience but also provides us with the crucial ability to accurately measure the return on investment from every marketing dollar spent, ensuring our efforts are impactful and sustainable.

On April 1, 2025, the JTB officially celebrated its Platinum Anniversary, marking seven decades as a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for the Caribbean's number one destination. The milestone anniversary celebrations are taking place under the theme “Celebrating A Creative and Resilient Spirit”.

The objective is to engage the team, people of Jamaica, stakeholders and partners in acknowledging and recognizing the contribution of the Jamaica Tourist Board to the tourism sector over these seven decades.

Madam Speaker, it is with great pride that we named the world's fastest man and eight-time Olympic gold medalist, Usain Bolt, as Jamaica's Global Tourism Ambassador. Our Director of Tourism, Donovan White,

made the announcement during JTB's 70th anniversary celebration at the historic Devon House in Kingston on May 22.

Our global marketing campaign, anchored by Usain's global appeal, is expected to be a game-changer for Jamaica's tourism marketing, seeking to attract millions to the island with a blend of technology, storytelling and unmistakable Jamaican pride.

PART III: INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION AND GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

Jamaica's Excellence Recognized Worldwide

Madam Speaker, on the world's tourism stage, Jamaica continues to shine with a brilliance that captures international attention and earns widespread recognition. Our exceptional performance has garnered numerous prestigious accolades that affirm our standing as a premier global destination, but more importantly, these awards reflect the authentic experiences and genuine satisfaction of visitors who choose Jamaica as their preferred travel destination.

I am delighted to report that Jamaica received multiple honours in Tripadvisor's 2025 Travelers' Choice® Awards, achieving the eleventh position as Best Culinary Destination in the World, thirteenth position as Best Honeymoon Destination in the World, and twenty-fourth position as

Best Cultural Destination in the World.

These awards, based entirely on authentic traveller reviews and ratings, recognize Jamaica's world-class cuisine, romantic atmosphere, and rich cultural heritage on the global stage. This recognition is particularly significant because it reflects the genuine experiences and satisfaction of visitors to our shores, not marketing campaigns or promotional efforts.

Madam Speaker, at the prestigious World Travel Awards, often referred to as the "Oscars of the travel industry," Jamaica once again dominated with several of our tourism entities receiving top honours. Sangster International Airport was awarded "Caribbean's Leading Airport 2024," marking another consecutive year of recognition for its outstanding service and facilities. This sustained excellence at our primary tourism gateway enhances the overall visitor experience from the moment international guests arrive and contributes significantly to Jamaica's reputation for quality service delivery.

Madam Speaker, we also earned six Travvy Awards in 2024, including Gold for Best Travel Agent Academy Programme, Silver for Best Culinary Destination – Caribbean and Best Tourism Board – Caribbean, and Bronze for Best Destination – Caribbean, Best Wedding Destination – Caribbean, and Best Honeymoon Destination – Caribbean. In addition, the Jamaica Tourist Board received the TravelAge West WAVE Award for "International Tourism Board Providing the Best Travel Advisor Support" for a record-setting twelfth consecutive time, underscoring our unwavering commitment to excellence in partner engagement and service delivery.

Personal Recognition Reflecting National Achievement

Madam Speaker, it is with profound humility that I acknowledge the international recognition bestowed upon me in my capacity as Minister of Tourism. These honours reflect not personal achievements, but rather the collective excellence of Jamaica's tourism sector and the dedication of all stakeholders who contribute to our nation's success in this vital industry.

In November 2024, I had the honour of receiving the Gusi Peace Prize in Manila, Philippines. Often referred to as Asia's equivalent of the Nobel Peace Prize, this prestigious award recognized contributions to the global tourism industry, particularly in championing tourism resilience and sustainability for small island developing states and advancing global cooperation in tourism during challenging times.

In January 2025, at FITUR in Madrid, Spain, I was presented with the Premio Excelencias Award for 2024, which honours excellence in tourism and cultural development.

This recognition highlighted Jamaica's visionary leadership and commitment to sustainable tourism practices, as well as pioneering initiatives such as establishing the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre that serves destinations worldwide.

Additionally, in November 2024, at the Global Tourism Investment Summit in London, United Kingdom, I received the International Tourism Investment Conference Award for contributions to the development of sustainable and resilient tourism practices in Jamaica. This award acknowledged Jamaica's pioneering advocacy for comprehensive

sustainability, capacity building for tourism resilience, and our balanced approach to tourism growth that considers environmental conservation and community development.

Madam Speaker, these accolades are validation of Jamaica's strategic approach to tourism development and our commitment to excellence at every level of industry operation. They represent the hard work, creativity, and dedication of thousands of Jamaicans across the tourism ecosystem who deliver exceptional experiences to our visitors day after day, often without recognition but never without impact.

Furthermore, these awards strengthen Jamaica's global brand, enhance our competitiveness in the international marketplace, and provide valuable third-party endorsement that supports our marketing efforts in key source markets. Most importantly, they reinforce confidence in our tourism product among international travellers, travel agents, tour operators, and industry partners, ultimately translating into increased visitor arrivals and economic benefits for all Jamaicans.

PART IV: LINKING TOURISM TO JAMAICA'S ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

The Tourism Linkages Network: Connecting Every Sector

Madam Speaker, when we speak of "linking tourism to every Jamaican's success," we are not engaging in political rhetoric or making empty promises. We are referring to concrete actions, measurable results, and

transformational initiatives that connect our primary industry to the broader economy in ways that create opportunities for farmers, manufacturers, artistes, hairdressers, taxi drivers, tour operators, chefs, digital marketers, content creators and many more workers across Jamaica.

Madam Speaker, our newly appointed Minister of State, Senator the Honourable Delano Seiveright, has been playing a lead role in systematically and strategically engaging the varying sectors and individuals, and in many ways, on a one-on-one basis, to quickly build out smooth and easily navigable pathways for all involved to ensure that everyone is effectively linked to achieve mutual success. This yeoman effort involves working across government and private sectors, local and international.

In that vein, Madam Speaker, the work of the Tourism Linkages Network (TLN) stands as a cornerstone of our strategy to ensure that the benefits of tourism permeate throughout our economy, like tributaries feeding into a mighty river. The TLN has strategically expanded to incorporate experiential tourism through five specialized networks and two technical working groups, each playing a crucial role in reducing import dependency, expanding local economic opportunities, and enhancing the authentic tourism experience that visitors seek when they choose Jamaica.

Madam Speaker, these specialized working groups—Agriculture and Manufacturing, as well as targeted networks—Gastronomy, Health and Wellness, Knowledge, Shopping, and Sports and Entertainment—align

perfectly with our goals. They position Jamaica's tourism sector to increase its consumption of goods and services that can be competitively sourced locally, ensuring that tourism dollars circulate through our economy rather than leaking overseas to benefit foreign suppliers.

Madam Speaker, tourism is deeply interconnected with nearly every sector of the economy. The multiplier effect is real and powerful. It drives 15% of construction, 10% of banking and finance, 20% of manufacturing and 21% of utilities, agriculture and fisheries. Other sectors also benefit significantly from tourism through initiatives under the Tourism Enhancement Fund, including education, national security and health. As tourism grows, so do these other economic sectors. This is why we are laser focused on deepening tourism linkages.

I have been a life-long advocate for the importance of tourism-dependent destinations like Jamaica owning the supply side of the industry to boost investments and earnings. Owning the supply side has the potential to create favourable conditions for investors and retain more of the foreign exchange earned locally from the industry.

When we control supply, we not only increase our share of the earnings but also ensure that investments remain within our economies.

This approach builds resilience, fuels local entrepreneurship, fosters inclusion and enables destinations to have a stronger voice in shaping their tourism destiny.

Imagine a future where local businesses supply every plate of food in resorts, every craft item in souvenir shops, and every eco-tourism

adventure. Imagine more profits circulating within our communities, empowering families and inspiring innovation.

Madam Speaker, we are already at critical point in our tourism development cycle where, as we attract more visitors and hotel investments, there will be many, many more opportunities for local suppliers to benefit from tourism's growing success.

Transforming Agriculture Through Tourism Demand

Madam Speaker, the Agri-Linkages Exchange, known throughout the industry as ALEX, continues to demonstrate remarkable success in connecting our farmers directly with hotels and food service providers across the tourism sector. Currently, approximately 2,000 farmers are registered on this innovative platform that has revolutionized how agricultural products reach tourism markets.

Between January and December 2024, ALEX facilitated the supply of approximately 3 million kilograms of produce valued at over J\$450 million. In just the first four months of 2025, from January to April, the platform has already generated earnings of J\$100 million for our farming communities. **IT IS IMPORTANT TO HIGHLIGHT MADAM SPEAKER THAT THESE NUMBERS ARE PART AND PARCEL OF OVERALL AGRICULTURE PRODUCE SALES TO THE SECTOR.** Many more billions are made via other arrangements involving small, medium and large farmers and entities.

These figures represent more than mere statistics, Madam Speaker. They

represent economic empowerment for our farmers who now have guaranteed markets for their produce. They represent reduction in foreign exchange leakage that previously drained resources from our economy.

They represent enhanced food security as our tourism industry reduces its dependence on imported agricultural products. And they represent the development of sustainable agricultural practices aligned with tourism demand that create long-term viability for farming communities.

Madam Speaker, building on this success, we have implemented targeted initiatives such as the Community Farming Project focused on lime and lemon production.

This project aims to plant 2,000 lime and lemon trees across seven parishes—Hanover, St. James, Trelawny, St. Andrew, Manchester, Westmoreland, and Clarendon—with ten farmers cultivating half-acre to one-acre plots. This initiative responds directly to the tourism sector's demand for these versatile citrus fruits, which are used extensively in culinary applications, beverages, and aromatherapy services that enhance the visitor experience.

Our responsive approach to sector challenges was demonstrated following the passage of Hurricane Beryl and the extended rainfall period that threatened agricultural production. Our Strawberry Project provided crucial post-disaster assistance to farmers affected by these weather events. With Jamaica importing over 600,000 kilograms of strawberries in 2023, there is clear potential for import substitution that benefits both

our farmers and our tourism industry.

The Tourism Enhancement Fund provided assistance to 15 farmers with protective greenhouses, and when four larger operations were affected by the hurricane, we promptly assisted with repairs, providing protective plastics, replacement metal poles, and planting materials to restore production levels.

Manufacturing Renaissance Through Tourism Markets

The Manufacturing Technical Working Group continues to create pathways for local manufacturers to access the lucrative tourism market through signature events and targeted business development initiatives that showcase Jamaican creativity and quality.

The tenth staging of Christmas in July, held on July 11-12, 2024, exemplifies the growing impact of these linkages on Jamaica's manufacturing sector. From 422 applicants, 220 manufacturers were selected to display their products to approximately 2,300 attendees from the hotel sector, gift shops, and corporate Jamaica.

This initiative has shown consistent and impressive growth, with applications increasing from a modest 127 in 2018 to 422 in 2024, demonstrating the expanding interest in tourism-related manufacturing opportunities and the growing recognition among local producers that tourism represents a viable and profitable market.

Our speed networking events have proven transformative in facilitating direct business relationships between local manufacturers and tourism

entities. The most recent event connected 110 manufacturers with 30 tourism entities through pre-scheduled fifteen-minute meetings with actual decision-makers who have the authority to make purchasing commitments.

Over the past decade, these initiatives have generated approximately J\$1 billion in business for local manufacturers, significantly reducing our reliance on imported goods while ensuring that small and micro enterprises benefit directly from tourism growth.

We are also strengthening connections with the cruise industry, as evidenced by our Business Opportunities Forum with Carnival Corporation, the largest cruise company in the world, held on September 23, 2024. This engagement facilitated 33 one-on-one meetings between over 45 local manufacturers and senior Carnival executives, providing guidance on sourcing requirements and opening new avenues for supplying this behemoth of a corporation.

Sports and Entertainment: Showcasing Jamaica's Cultural Wealth

Madam Speaker, Jamaica's rich cultural heritage in music and sports provides a natural platform for tourism diversification that leverages our authentic competitive advantages. The Sports and Entertainment Network is positioning Jamaica as a global hub for entertainment and sports tourism, developing events and experiences that attract international visitors while showcasing our cultural assets to the world.

A significant achievement has been the Carnival in Jamaica initiative, which unites various stakeholders—including bands, event promoters, costumers, and local suppliers—into one vibrant, cohesive national experience that has become a hallmark of cultural tourism and an economic catalyst for communities across Jamaica.

The recently completed Economic Impact Assessment of Carnival in Jamaica confirmed the initiative's substantial contribution to our economy with findings that demonstrate the transformational power of well-managed cultural events.

The assessment revealed J\$6.1 billion in total economic activity generated by Carnival in 2023, over 112,000 attendees including more than 17,000 visitors who travelled to Jamaica specifically for the event, over 1,200 direct and indirect jobs supported spanning events management, accommodation, transportation, food and beverage, entertainment, and retail sectors, and a return on investment of seven to one, demonstrating the event's significant fiscal and social value.

These outcomes affirm Carnival's role not only in strengthening Jamaica's entertainment brand globally but also in delivering meaningful benefits to local communities and businesses.

It serves as a prime example of how cultural tourism, when properly organized and promoted, becomes a driver of employment, revenue, and broad-based economic growth that extends far beyond the entertainment sector itself.

Health and Wellness: Capitalizing on Global Trends

Madam Speaker, wellness tourism represents one of the fastest-growing segments globally, and Jamaica is strategically positioned to capitalize on this trend through our natural resources, traditional healing practices, and high-quality spa experiences that international travellers increasingly seek.

The Health and Wellness Network is establishing Jamaica as a leader in this space by leveraging our competitive advantages. Our Standardization and Certification Programme for Skincare and Haircare Products has engaged 240 local manufacturers between 2023 and 2024, providing capacity building, product testing, and standardization training that enables these businesses to compete in international markets.

Through partnerships with the Scientific Research Council and Bureau of Standards Jamaica, we are helping manufacturers meet international quality and testing standards, enhancing their competitiveness in the tourism market while building Jamaica's reputation for quality wellness products.

The Jamaica Health and Wellness Tourism Conference attracted 545 participants and 35 exhibitors offering products and services across multiple categories including wellness and skincare products, wellness excursions and tours, nutrition products, technology solutions, and spa services. This platform showcases Jamaica's wellness tourism offerings to global audiences while fostering industry collaboration and innovation that drives sector growth.

PART V: FOSTERING INNOVATION AND CREATIVE EXCELLENCE

Tourism Entertainment Academy: Professionalizing Our Creative Sector

Madam Speaker, on March 27, 2025, we officially launched the Tourism Entertainment Academy (TEA), a strategic initiative of the Tourism Enhancement Fund that represents a quantum leap in our approach to enhancing entertainment offerings within Jamaica's tourism sector. This programme supports intermediate-level Jamaican artists—musicians, comedians, and other entertainers—by providing professional training and business skills development to ensure higher quality entertainment that meets international standards while preserving our authentic cultural expressions.

The development of TEA was informed by extensive research, including a comprehensive ecosystem study that analyzed demand from tourists, hotels, and local audiences, supply from entertainment practitioners across Jamaica, and the enabling environment provided by performing arts institutions.

Our findings highlighted strong visitor interest in reggae, jazz, and comedy experiences, alongside a critical need for training in professional and business skills among entertainers, with a strong preference for short, focused courses that working artists can realistically complete.

This industry-responsive initiative, carried out in partnership with the

prestigious Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, has four core objectives that will transform how entertainment operates within our tourism sector. We are upskilling and certifying Jamaican entertainment practitioners to international standards.

We are establishing high-quality weekly entertainment in venues across Montego Bay that will serve as a model for other resort areas. We are demonstrating measurable return on investment in performer training that justifies continued expansion. And we are creating a sustainable entertainment ecosystem that is fully integrated into Jamaica's tourism sector.

Madam Speaker, the TEA pilot programme, centred in Montego Bay, features a comprehensive ten-week training and rehearsal programme running from June to September 2025, culminating in fifteen live showcase performances across selected venues from September to October 2025. The pilot cohort includes fifteen reggae band members, twelve jazz band members, and six comedians from the parishes of St. James, Trelawny, and Hanover, ensuring broad geographic representation and diverse artistic perspectives.

Madam Speaker, this initiative represents much more than entertainment enhancement, it exemplifies our commitment to talent development, professional growth, and cultural authenticity that positions Jamaica as a destination where visitors experience genuine, high-quality cultural expressions.

By focusing on business and professional skills such as contract

negotiation, invoicing, intellectual property management, and marketing, we are ensuring that our creative professionals can build sustainable careers within the tourism ecosystem rather than struggling as informal participants in an unstructured market.

Tourism Innovation Incubator: Cultivating Tomorrow's Tourism Leaders

Madam Speaker, Innovation is the lifeblood of a competitive tourism industry, and I am therefore delighted to report on the remarkable success of our Tourism Innovation Incubator Challenge 2024, which has attracted unprecedented interest and demonstrates the entrepreneurial energy that exists within Jamaica's tourism sector. We received 222 applications between April 12 and May 6, 2024, representing a staggering 553% increase from the 34 applications received in 2022.

From these applications, twenty-two teams were initially selected, with nineteen outstanding teams remaining in the programme, developing innovative business ideas across a diverse range of categories that reflect the dynamic evolution of tourism technology and service delivery.

These categories include underwater experiences that leverage Jamaica's marine resources, virtual reality applications that enhance visitor engagement, transportation solutions that improve mobility and accessibility, sustainability initiatives that address environmental concerns, and artificial intelligence applications that personalize visitor experiences.

These entrepreneurs have participated in an intensive boot camp in partnership with TechBeach Retreat, focusing on digital prototyping, business development, and market research that prepares them for successful commercialization of their innovations.

The programme culminated with a Pitch Event last month, where potential investors and strategic business partners will engage with the entrepreneurs and explore collaboration opportunities that can transform innovative ideas into viable tourism businesses.

The selected entrepreneurs have introduced truly innovative solutions for our tourism sector that demonstrate the creativity and technical capability of young Jamaicans. These include travel and accommodation platforms that simplify trip planning, offer budget-friendly accommodations, and cater to the growing digital nomad market that seeks authentic Caribbean experiences.

We have cultural and heritage tourism experiences featuring guided tours, virtual reality-based experiences, and festival concepts celebrating Jamaica's rich history in ways that engage modern travellers. Health and wellness tourism offerings include virtual balneotherapy, wellness retreat experiences, and sustainable farm stays that capitalize on growing global interest in wellness travel.

In total, Madam Speaker, three teams that participated in the Tourism Innovation Incubator programme have secured funding totalling more than thirty million dollars, demonstrating the tangible economic impact

of this initiative and its potential to transform Jamaica's tourism landscape through technology and innovation.

There is one success story I want to highlight and that is Dr. Duane Chambers, the winner of TEF's 2023 Tourism Innovation Incubator, who has translated his healthcare expertise into a pioneering tourism startup - Caribbean Front Desk. This revitalizes Jamaica's wellness identity by:

- Uniting cultural and medical wellness in a modern platform.
- Driving measurable economic benefit through wellness tourist spending and business opportunities for local providers.
- Advancing Jamaica's positioning in a rapidly expanding global wellness tourism sector, an evolution strongly endorsed by us.

In essence, the Incubator has facilitated the transition from concept to execution, positioning Caribbean Front Desk as a flagship innovation in Jamaica's tourism transformation, with Dr. Chambers leading as both innovator and practitioner.

PART VI: EMPOWERING HUMAN CAPITAL THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Jamaica Centre for Tourism Innovation (JCTI): Building World-Class Talent

Madam Speaker, as we pursue our vision of linking tourism to every Jamaican's success, human capital development remains the cornerstone

of our strategy because we understand that no destination can succeed without skilled, professional, and passionate people delivering exceptional experiences to visitors.

The JCTI, which operates under the Tourism Enhancement Fund, continues to lead our efforts in this critical area with programmes that are transforming how Jamaicans prepare for and advance in tourism careers.

For the period April 2024 to March 2025, the JCTI achieved remarkable results in certifying tourism workers across multiple disciplines that reflect the diverse skill requirements of our modern tourism industry. Of the 3,100 candidates who registered for certification programmes, 2,746 successfully received certification, reflecting an impressive 89% pass rate that demonstrates both the quality of our training and the dedication of Jamaican workers committed to excellence.

The range of certifications awarded demonstrates the breadth of our human capital development initiatives and our commitment to professional standards. We awarded 1,995 certifications through the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute and National Restaurant Association, 686 certifications through HEART NSTA Trust, and 65 certifications through the American Culinary Federation, ensuring that Jamaican tourism workers receive internationally recognized credentials that enhance their career prospects and earning potential.

Our Guest Service Gold Tourism programme resulted in 1,289 Certified Guest Service Professionals, demonstrating our commitment to enhancing the visitor experience through professional service excellence

that distinguishes Jamaica from other destinations.

The Hospitality and Tourism Management programme, conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Education & Youth, completed its 2023/24 cohort with 191 students receiving dual certification from both the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute and MCTVET Level 3. The 2024/25 cohort, which began in September 2024, has expanded to include 21 high schools and the HEART College of Hospitality Services, with 336 students currently preparing for examinations and internships this summer.

Our culinary certification efforts have borne exceptional fruit, with 65 chefs receiving certifications ranging from Certified Culinarian to Executive Chef. In collaboration with the American Culinary Federation Educational Institute, we have facilitated the accreditation of Montego Bay Community College and the University of Technology, enabling their culinary graduates to receive internationally recognized certifications that open doors to career opportunities throughout the Caribbean and beyond.

Additionally, Madam Speaker, our Summer Internship Programme continues to provide valuable industry exposure to our young people, creating pathways between education and employment that ensure our youth can build careers in tourism. In 2024, we received over 16,000 applications and successfully placed over 1,120 interns with 167 employers, providing them with practical experience and professional certifications that enhance their employability and prepare them for leadership roles in Jamaica's tourism future.

The Artisan Village at Falmouth: Cultural Tourism Excellence

The Artisan Village at Falmouth (AVF) is a groundbreaking, not-for-profit initiative by the Government of Jamaica, implemented by the JCTI, a division of TEF. Our core mission is to create unique Jamaican experiences that stand out, fostering a new era of tourism centred on our vibrant culture.

Opened in April 2024 at the Port Authority of Jamaica's Heritage Port, the AVF transformed Hampden Wharf into a dynamic cultural hub. The JCTI and the Tourism Linkages Network identified and onboarded small and micro-entrepreneurs, providing them with a vital entry point into the tourism value chain. Nearly all of our 47 shops are now occupied, showcasing authentic Jamaican food, drink, culture, arts and crafts.

The AVF blends history with innovation, chronicling the history of 19th-century Trelawny through both immersive storytelling and cutting-edge 21st-century technology. Virtual Reality technology is used to introduce visitors to the many characters who lived and worked in Trelawny at the time. Further, visitors – young and old – may play games using Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality at the Village.

Our entertainment programme features young, talented performers from Western Jamaica, many trained and certified through partnerships with HEART NSTA Trust and City & Guilds, delivering four live shows daily. The

AVF is a public good, designed to empower these entrepreneurs and their families, fostering economic growth and cultural pride.

Strategic marketing efforts have yielded significant results. Our participation in the April 2025 Seatrade Cruise Show led to direct pitches to major cruise lines. Carnival Cruise Line will promote the AVF for two years free of cost across all eight of its lines. Disney Cruise Line is keen to partner on family-focused cruises and support our artisans and entertainers, with a follow-up meeting planned for July 2025. MSC Cruises has connected us with their shore-side programme managers, who are expected in October. To build on this momentum, the TEF is hiring a dedicated Business Development Manager to further increase footfall at the AVF.

PART VII: STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

Road Rehabilitation: Improving Access to Jamaica's Treasures

Madam Speaker, beyond human capital development, our ministry continues to invest strategically in tourism infrastructure that enhances visitor experiences, improves accessibility for our communities, and creates a more appealing tourism product that benefits both residents and visitors.

I am pleased to report significant progress on the rehabilitation of the roadway from Alexandria to Ballintoy, which serves as the main access

route to the Bob Marley Mausoleum attraction in Nine Mile. This project, which has been executed in carefully planned phases, is dramatically improving the driving experience and reducing travel time for both international visitors and local community members who depend on this critical transportation link.

The project encompasses comprehensive improvements including de-bushing, drain cleaning, asphaltic concrete works, and retaining wall construction that address decades of infrastructure challenges. Phases one through three have been successfully completed, covering approximately five kilometres of roadway, while steps are currently being taken to commence works on Phase four, targeting an additional 1.5 kilometres, that will complete this transformational project.

Similarly, we have made significant progress on the rehabilitation of West End Road in Negril. This project has dramatically improved the tourism product in Negril by enhancing accessibility for pedestrians and motorists, encouraging tourists to explore beyond their hotels and venture into new spaces and attractions that showcase the authentic character of this iconic destination.

In St. Mary, we have completed the rehabilitation of several key roadways in Tower Isle, including Ocean View Roadway covering 550 metres, Swaby Avenue & Johnson Drive spanning 580 metres, and Arawak Avenue extending 200 metres.

Architectural Bus Sheds: Enhancing Tourism Aesthetics

Madam Speaker, as part of our commitment to enhancing the aesthetics

and functionality of our tourism infrastructure, we have partnered with several Municipal Corporations to erect architectural-style bus sheds across resort areas that serve both residents and visitors while improving the visual appeal of our tourism destinations.

First introduced by the St. Ann Municipal Corporation in 2019 as a safety measure and contribution to the urban transportation system, these standardized bus sheds are designed to withstand adverse weather conditions while improving each parish's aesthetic appeal. To date, we have facilitated the erection of twenty bus sheds in St. Ann, twenty bus sheds in Trelawny, ten bus sheds along the Elegant Corridor in St. James, eleven bus sheds in St. Mary, and six bus sheds currently in progress in Hanover.

For the fiscal year 2025/26, we have allocated J\$14 million for this initiative and plan to erect an additional five bus sheds each in Negril and Montego Bay resort areas, continuing our commitment to infrastructure improvements that benefit both tourism and community development.

TEF Beaches Programme: Creating World-Class Coastal Experiences

Madam Speaker, our TEF Beaches Programme addresses the present challenges of coastal erosion, prohibitive entry fees, and inadequate maintenance by creating first-world beach experiences for both local communities and visitors. This programme aligns perfectly with Vision 2030 goals and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, creating sustainable eco-tourism products that offer recreational and

entertainment opportunities while preserving our coastal environment.

For the 2025/26 fiscal year, we have identified three beaches for comprehensive development that will set new standards for public beach facilities in Jamaica.

- Priory Bathing & Fishing Beach in St. Ann is currently in the final design review stage.
- Success Beach in St. James has completed final design reviews.
- Paggee Beach in St. Mary has also completed final design reviews.

These developments will include revenue centres such as restaurants, bars, and commercial spaces that create economic opportunities for local entrepreneurs. Safety and security features including security posts, medical areas, and lifeguard facilities will ensure visitor and resident safety. Essential amenities including wastewater infrastructure, parking, and facilities for differently abled persons will ensure accessibility for all Jamaicans. Unique architectural features will enhance the beach experience while reflecting Jamaica's cultural aesthetic.

Community Development: Prioritizing Affordable Housing for Tourism Workers

Madam Speaker, we are committed to assisting in the development of housing solutions so our tourism workers can enjoy a more comfortable way of life. We are doing this by addressing the challenges of affordability

and availability through public-private partnerships, housing assistance programmes and employer responsibility.

The Ministry of Tourism has already entered into partnerships with the Ministry of Housing, the National Housing Trust and private housing developers for units in Rhyne Park Estate and Grange Pen, St. James, to be acquired by our hard-working tourism workers.

We also welcome the pledge by four major international hotel investor groups, including RCD Hotels, Bahia Principe and Princess Resorts, who have committed to constructing over 2,000 residential units for industry employees combined. This includes apartments and houses for the workers and their immediate relatives.

Madam Speaker, we have undertaken a significant initiative to address the infrastructure challenges in the Grange Pen community in St. James. This community comprises hotel and attraction workers, artisans, entertainers, chefs, and various service workers who meet the employment needs of the tourism industry and deserve quality infrastructure that reflects their vital contribution to Jamaica's success.

In June 2018, the TEF commenced efforts to address infrastructural issues in this community, partnering with the Housing Agency of Jamaica to regularize 535 households over four years. Despite challenges posed by dense rock terrain throughout the project location, the project is now 95% completed with remarkable achievements that have transformed this community.

Madam Speaker, nineteen of the twenty-one roads are 100% completed

with asphaltic concrete surfaces. Ten of the eleven footpaths are 100% completed, providing safe pedestrian access throughout the community. Sewer infrastructure has been completed on twenty-two roads, footpaths, and easements, ensuring proper sanitation for all residents.

Water supply infrastructure, including comprehensive testing by the National Water Commission, is completed on sixteen roads, footpaths, and easements, providing reliable access to clean water for all families.

PART VIII: TOURISM ENHANCEMENT FUND FINANCIAL EXCELLENCE

Demonstrating Fiscal Responsibility and Growth

Madam Speaker, the Tourism Enhancement Fund's financial performance for the 2024/25 fiscal year has been exemplary, demonstrating the robust health of our tourism sector while providing the resources necessary to fund the comprehensive initiatives I have outlined throughout this presentation.

Our primary revenue stream, though accessed via the Consolidated Fund, continues to be the Tourism Enhancement Fee collected from both airline and cruise passengers, a system that ensures visitors contribute directly to the enhancement of the tourism product they enjoy during their stay in Jamaica.

Supporting Tourism Entrepreneurship Through Strategic Lending

The TEF continues to support small and medium tourism enterprises through its innovative loan programme administered by the EXIM Bank, providing vital financial support to entrepreneurs seeking to participate in or expand their presence in the tourism sector. This initiative represents our commitment to ensuring that Jamaicans can build businesses that enhance our tourism product while generating employment and economic benefits at the community level.

For the fiscal year 2024/25, seventy-four loans were disbursed with a total value of approximately J\$501 million, supporting enterprises across the tourism value chain from accommodation providers to tour operators to restaurant owners. This brings the cumulative figures since the inception of the programme to 509 loans with a total disbursement of approximately J\$2.5 billion representing substantial investment in Jamaican tourism entrepreneurship.

As of the end of the fiscal year, approximately J\$600 million remained available for future lending, ensuring continued support for tourism entrepreneurs in the coming year and beyond. This availability of capital ensures that qualified entrepreneurs will have access to the financing they need to launch and expand tourism businesses that contribute to Jamaica's economic growth.

PART IX: PUBLIC BODY ACHIEVEMENTS AND OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Tourism Product Development Company: Safeguarding Standards

The Tourism Product Development Company Limited serves as the implementation arm of the Ministry of Tourism, playing a critical role in safeguarding Jamaica's competitive edge through strategic initiatives that support the enhancement of product quality, service standards, community engagement, and overall visitor experience that distinguishes Jamaica from other destinations.

Effective regulation is essential to maintaining the high standards for which Jamaica's tourism product is internationally recognized. During the 2024/2025 fiscal year, TPDCo facilitated the approval of a total of 6,646 licenses across various tourism-related operations, demonstrating the scope and scale of tourism activity across Jamaica. This impressive figure includes 4,584 Contract Carriage licenses, 879 Craft Traders licenses, 853 Domestic Tour Contract Carriage licenses, 165 Domestic Tour licenses, 97 Watersports licenses, 22 Attractions licenses, 24 Car Rental licenses, 11 Non-Hotel licenses, 6 Hotel licenses, 3 Homestay licenses, and 2 Bike Rental licenses.

This robust regulatory oversight supports enhanced safety and compliance while improving service standards across the sector, ensuring that our visitors consistently receive world-class experiences that meet

or exceed international expectations.

In alignment with our emphasis on human capital development, TPDCo successfully engaged 6,187 individuals across 389 training programmes during the fiscal year, strategically focused on preparing tourism stakeholders to deliver service that meets global standards of excellence. Team Jamaica Training certified 3,349 persons through 243 sessions, while Skills Upgrading courses reached 972 participants through specialized training in Customer Service Excellence, Tour Guiding, Supervisory Management, and Foreign Language capabilities.

Jam-Iconic Experience Landmarks

Madam Speaker, we are pleased with TPDCo's 'Jam-Iconic Experience' initiative, a creative public space enhancement programme that installs destination-specific sculptural landmarks designed to boost civic pride, enhance visitor engagement, and celebrate Jamaica's cultural heritage.

With over J\$50 million invested so far, landmarks have been erected in Montego Bay, Negril, and most recently, in Falmouth, where a striking design featuring rum barrels and interpretive storyboards now greets visitors at the town's entrance. These installations not only offer compelling visual and educational experiences but also serve as powerful social media touchpoints that drive foot traffic, economic activity, and community pride.

Madam Speaker, remarkable strides continue to be made under the Jam-

Iconic Experiences initiative, with the transformation of the Hope Gardens site, where the latest landmark was officially unveiled just days ago on June 10. This beloved green oasis now offers a revitalized, interactive, and culturally enriching experience, preserving its natural beauty while celebrating its historical significance. Building on this momentum, new Jam-Iconic sites in Ocho Rios and Port Royal are scheduled for completion in the 2025/2026 financial year.

By marrying heritage with modern tourism appeal, the Jam-Iconic programme reflects TPDCo's broader goal of creating immersive, sustainable, and community-rooted tourism experiences across Jamaica.

Tourism Ground Transportation Sector

As noted, earlier Madam Speaker we have 4,584 Contract Carriage licenses and 853 Domestic Tour Contract Carriage licenses issued. This is over 40% more licenses than we had ten years ago, showing clearly that our Tourism Ground Transportation sector has grown significantly over the life of this administration, bringing with it huge opportunities and creating many success stories, but also seeing increasing complexities and challenges.

As Jamaica continues to expand its tourism offerings and attract millions of visitors annually, it is critical that supporting sectors, especially transportation, are managed with transparency, fairness, and efficiency.

Current Challenges Identified by Operators Include:

1. High parking costs at hotels via third-party operations

2. Unregulated access by ride-share operators such as Uber, who use private vehicles without adherence to the same standards.
3. The presence and unchecked activity of illegal operators competing unfairly with licensed providers.

Madam Speaker, the Government remains committed to supporting the sector's growth while ensuring that it operates in a fair, regulated, and transparent environment. A mix of moral suasion, administrative interventions, and possibly legislative action will be key to striking the right balance. Continued collaboration among government, hoteliers, and transportation operators will be essential to building a stronger, more inclusive tourism ecosystem.

In that vein, Madam Speaker, we welcome the establishment of the Jamaica Tourism Ground Transportation Association, which pulls in broad representation across the tourism ground transportation space and we equally note that we will listen and consult with players across the board as we work together in addressing some of the serious concerns.

I want to note and put firmly on record that Minister Seiveright and I have engaged with hotel sector leadership, here and overseas, to bring to their attention the need to adjust their operations to better ensure fairness and transparency. We are already seeing positive outcomes given increased awareness. Nonetheless, I have instructed my Ministry to continue consultations on the issues and move within the coming weeks to implement further measures aimed at better assuring fairness and transparency across the board.

Devon House: Heritage Preservation and Innovation

Madam Speaker, Devon House Development Limited (DHDL) continues to uphold its mandate of preserving Jamaica's cultural heritage while embracing sustainability, innovation, and commercial viability that ensures this national treasure remains accessible to future generations.

The Green Heritage Initiative represents a landmark commitment to environmental stewardship and long-term operational efficiency. At the heart of this initiative are two major sustainability efforts: the reactivation of the existing well water system on the estate, which will drastically reduce dependence on municipal water sources while cutting utility costs, and the planned integration of solar energy across the property, which will reduce Devon House's carbon footprint while demonstrating our commitment to eco-conscious innovation.

DHDL is in the final stages of negotiating a landmark royalty agreement with Scoops Unlimited for the Devon House branded ice cream line, representing a major milestone in transforming brand equity into sustainable, long-term revenue.

This partnership will protect and amplify one of Jamaica's most beloved culinary products while providing consistent income that supports the preservation and enhancement of Devon House operations.

Montego Bay Convention Centre: Business Tourism Excellence

Madam Speaker, the Montego Bay Convention Centre (MBCC) has recorded a landmark year of growth in 2024/25, reaffirming its position

as Jamaica's leading venue for meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions while contributing significantly to our business tourism sector that complements our leisure tourism offerings.

The Centre generated approximately J\$389 million in own-source revenue, significantly exceeding the budgeted J\$278.6 million and representing an impressive 87.1% increase over the previous year's J\$206 million. Equally impressive is the Centre's Gross Operating Profit, which rose dramatically to J\$190 million, up from J\$46 million in the previous fiscal year, demonstrating strategic cost management and enhanced operational efficiency.

The MBCC's marketing efforts have yielded substantial results, with a 35% increase in brand recall and a significant surge in international MICE leads that position Jamaica as a premier destination for business tourism. For the new fiscal year, the MBCC will continue to strengthen Jamaica's global positioning in business tourism through enhanced digital marketing and strategic partnerships.

PART X: LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Major Legislative Programme for 2025/2026

The Ministry of Tourism continues to work diligently on legislative priorities for the 2025/2026 Legislative Year, with amendments designed

to strengthen our regulatory framework, modernize operations, and ensure that our tourism sector continues to thrive in an ever-changing global environment that demands adaptability and innovation.

Madam Speaker, the process to repeal and replace the Tourist Board Act is now complete and I am pleased to report that the new Act was tabled earlier today. The new Act contains modernized provisions in keeping with current realities and strengthens the enforcement provisions that ensure Jamaica maintains its reputation for quality tourism experiences. This comprehensive update now enhances the Jamaica Tourist Board's ability to effectively regulate the sector, promote our destination, and respond to emerging trends and challenges in global tourism. Madam Speaker, the new Tourist Board Act will also repeal the River Rafting Act and will transfer regulatory and operational functions of the River Rafting Authority to the Jamaica Tourist Board.

The modernization of the Travel Agency Act and its regulations addresses legislation that dates back to 1956, requiring significant updating to reflect the revolutionary changes that have occurred in the travel agency business model over the past seven decades. The amendment will take into account modern developments including online booking platforms, digital marketing, and changing consumer behaviours while revising application and registration procedures for licensing of travel agencies and travel agents.

Madam Speaker, the amendment of the Bath of St. Thomas the Apostle Act and Milk River Act will modernize these pieces of legislation and remove legislative hurdles to entering public-private partnerships for the Milk

River Hotel and Spa and Bath Fountain Hotel. These partnerships are designed to facilitate the development of these facilities into world-class wellness tourism destinations that capitalize on Jamaica's natural therapeutic resources.

Strategic Policy Framework Development

Madam Speaker, as we execute our vision of linking tourism to every Jamaican's success, the Ministry has pursued a robust policy agenda designed to create a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient tourism sector that serves as a model for other destinations worldwide.

We completed, Madam Speaker, a comprehensive Labour Market Study that provides valuable insights and statistical evidence on employment conditions within our tourism sector. This study has been particularly timely, as it revealed significant inconsistencies in voluntary gratuity payment systems across tourism establishments, with varying practices creating confusion among workers.

The Ministry has developed a concept paper detailing options for standardizing the pooling and distribution of gratuities and tips in the accommodation subsector, demonstrating our commitment to ensuring that tourism workers receive fair compensation and transparent treatment.

The Destination Assurance Framework and Strategy has advanced as a national strategic mechanism to enhance visitor confidence in Jamaica's tourism product. Following extensive stakeholder consultations involving more than 300 stakeholders during the Green Paper phase and

over 750 during White Paper validation in 2023. We are currently seeking White Paper approval from Cabinet. The finalized Framework and Strategy is expected to be tabled in Parliament within the first quarter of the 2025/2026 Financial Year.

Madam Speaker, we are revising the National Community Tourism Policy to strengthen institutional capacity for community tourism development. The Policy is currently being revised to assess the effectiveness of current approaches, develop updated strategies to adapt to industry changes, and create a robust monitoring and evaluation framework for effective implementation.

The Revised National Community Tourism Policy and Strategy has been completed and approved by Cabinet as a Green Paper. Madam Speaker, the Ministry is now in the process of preparing for national consultations on the Green Paper.

The Framework for the Measurement of Sustainable Tourism in Jamaica is based on the UN Statistical Framework published in 2024, designed to support the recording and presentation of data about tourism sustainability. During 2024/2025, we received J\$6.5 million in funding from the Inter-American Development Bank to support initial stakeholder workshops, and during 2025/2026, we will pursue advancement of this framework as a strategic priority.

Madam Speaker, our Multi-hazard Contingency Planning continues to develop comprehensive disaster risk-reduction strategies for the tourism sector. We convened Tourism Emergency Management Committee

meetings in February and June 2024, activated the Tourism Emergency Operations Centre during Hurricane Beryl's passage, and conducted training initiatives that strengthened stakeholder capacity to prepare for, respond to, and manage hazards and disasters.

Priority Policy Initiatives for 2025/2026

Looking ahead to the 2025/2026 fiscal year, Madam Speaker, the Ministry will pursue several priority policy initiatives that will further enhance our tourism product and extend its benefits to more Jamaicans across our island.

The National Policy on Water-Based Activities will establish a framework for the development of water-based recreational activities in Jamaica, streamlining operational and regulatory requirements of the water sports sector while promoting sustainability in coastal zones and watersheds.

This policy will govern the integrated management of motorized and non-motorized water-based leisure sports in marine and riverine areas while enhancing visitor experience through expanded water sports opportunities in safe and healthy environments. The National Policy on Water-Based Activities has been approved by Cabinet as a Green Paper. Madam Speaker, the Ministry is now in the process of preparing for national consultations on this Green Paper as well.

Madam Speaker, the revision of the Tourism Linkages Networks Policy will focus on developing and harnessing the local tourism value chain to

build productive capacity, address supply chain disruptions, and improve overall competitiveness. Cross-sectoral linkages with non-traditional industries will be a central policy theme for diversification of Jamaica's touristic offerings and development of niche markets. The revision will be retitled as the Tourism Linkages Network Policy and Action Plan to reflect our strategic direction.

Madam Speaker, we will pursue an Assessment of the Tourism Satellite Account to review methodology, analyze barriers and challenges, and provide recommendations for improved compilation through updated methodologies and expanded data. Additionally, the Economic Leakage Study will develop a measurement tool to reliably and consistently measure local industry penetration in the tourism sector, monitoring and evaluating the impact of our coordinated linkage efforts.

PART XI: OUR STRATEGIC VISION FOR 2025/2026

Tourism for All Jamaicans: Fifteen Strategic Pillars for Inclusive Growth

Madam Speaker, our manifesto for inclusive growth is founded on fifteen strategic pillars that will guide our work in the coming fiscal year, ensuring that every Jamaican can participate in and benefit from tourism's continued success.

More Affordable Housing for Tourism Workers represents our commitment to mandating and incentivizing resort developers to include on-site or nearby staff accommodations. Building on our J\$500 million TEF allocation for worker housing under the HOPE Programme, we will expand partnerships with the National Housing Trust (NHT), Housing Agency of Jamaica (HAJ), and private sector developers to construct affordable housing solutions for workers in all major resort towns. This ensures that those who serve our visitors can live with dignity near their places of employment.

Madam Speaker, our **Local First** initiative will pass legislation and implement incentives to ensure greater participation of Jamaican manufacturers, farmers, creatives, and professionals in the tourism supply chain. This approach ensures more local money stays in local hands and circulates through our communities. The initiative builds directly on our ALEX platform success and our achievement of 40.8% tourism dollar retention, which demonstrates the effectiveness of deliberate linkage strategies.

Boosting Youth through Tourism Innovation and Training will expand the Tourism Innovation Incubator and JCTI certification programmes island-wide to reach more youth, creatives, and tech innovators who represent Jamaica's future. Special support will be given to young entrepreneurs in rural areas and inner-city communities, building on our 550% increase in incubator applications that demonstrate unprecedented interest in tourism entrepreneurship.

Madam Speaker, **Spruce Up Jamaica 2.0** will expand and double funding for our successful initiative, bringing beautification, tourism microprojects, heritage upgrades, and job creation to every single constituency across Jamaica. This programme has already delivered dozens of community beautification projects while creating temporary jobs and empowering local artisans to contribute to tourism development.

Making Every Jamaican a Tourism Stakeholder will promote "Shared Tourism Prosperity," an approach that ensures more Jamaicans own, work in, and earn from the sector. This will be achieved through comprehensive training and business grants, easier access to loans for small businesses, and tourism-linked jobs for people with diverse skills, from farmers to IT experts who can contribute to our industry's growth.

Madam Speaker, **New Frontiers Development** will accelerate tourism expansion in untapped areas like St. Thomas, Clarendon, and Manchester, with planned eco-tourism, heritage trails, and luxury boutique resorts that create new jobs and spread tourism dollars beyond traditional resort areas. This aligns with our Jamaica Blue Ocean Strategy focused on product differentiation and frontier tourism development.

Climate-Smart and Resilient Tourism Development will ensure that new tourism investments are climate-resilient and sustainable, safeguarding our beaches, marine ecosystems, and communities for future generations. The Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC) will be expanded to train more workers and guide businesses in climate-smart practices that protect both our environment and our economic interests.

Unlocking the Power of Cruise Tourism builds on our success with over 1.2 million cruise passengers and inaugural visits from prestigious vessels like Disney Treasure and Celebrity Ascent. Through Jamaica Vacations Limited (JAMVAC), our dedicated agency mandated to increase tourist visits through airlift and cruise development, we will work with global partners to expand cruise tourism offerings that benefit locals directly, from new cruise village projects to craft and cultural showcases that demonstrate authentic Jamaican creativity.

Expanding Beach Access and Quality will continue our work with the Urban Development Corporation to upgrade and develop more public beaches with clean, safe facilities, lifeguards, and activities for families. Our commitment is clear: every parish must have at least one world-class public beach that serves both residents and visitors.

Tourism for the People through our National Events and Culture Programme builds on the remarkable success of Carnival in Jamaica, which generated over J\$5 billion in 2025. We will create more cultural and entertainment events throughout the year across Jamaica, linking them to tourism while supporting local artists, musicians, chefs, and dancers who preserve and share our cultural heritage.

Reforming Tourism Ground Transportation for Fairness and Growth will implement comprehensive reforms to improve Jamaica's tourism ground transportation sector. We will work closely with civil society to ensure fairness, standardize hotel access for licensed operators, and eliminate illegal transport that undermines legitimate businesses and compromises visitor safety.

Empowering Youth in Tourism will expand initiatives that provide funding, training, and mentorship for youth-led tourism enterprises, ensuring more young Jamaicans can thrive as business owners and leaders in an industry that offers unlimited potential for innovation and growth.

Digital Transformation of Tourism Services will implement a national digital tourism platform to support local bookings, promotions, and service quality tracking. This will give small operators and artisans more visibility and control over their earnings while enhancing the overall visitor experience through technology.

Our **National Tourism Loyalty & Discount Programme** will launch a "Love Jamaica Travel Pass" to encourage locals to explore the island with discounted access to attractions, hotels, and events. This will stimulate the domestic tourism market and support small operators year-round while building pride in our tourism product among Jamaicans.

Protecting Heritage and Natural Assets will work with communities to restore and preserve cultural and heritage sites while supporting environmental tourism projects that create jobs and safeguard our natural treasures for future generations who will inherit the Jamaica we leave behind.

CONCLUSION: TOURISM AS A PATHWAY TO NATIONAL PROSPERITY

As we conclude, let us reflect upon the transformative journey our nation has embarked upon together. Tourism, under this administration, has blossomed far beyond an industry—it has become the very heartbeat of Jamaica, fueling prosperity, growth, and unity throughout every community and sector.

Over the past two terms, we have witnessed tourism ignite unprecedented growth in our agricultural fields, uplifting our farmers and revitalizing rural economies. We have seen our manufacturing sector thrive, proudly delivering Jamaican-made goods that stand tall on the global stage. Our infrastructure has experienced significant advancements—new roads, upgraded ports, and world-class airports – all vital arteries of progress connecting communities across our island.

Critically, tourism has reinforced national security, creating safer, more peaceful environments not just for visitors, but fundamentally for every Jamaican citizen. It has elevated our cultural and creative industries, spotlighting Jamaican artists, musicians, and performers internationally, preserving our heritage and inspiring pride among our people.

Tourism has become a symbol of inclusivity, providing opportunities equally across our cities and countryside, empowering individuals, families, and communities. Every Jamaican, from Kingston to Montego Bay, from the Blue Mountains to the shores of Negril, has felt the tangible benefits of our collective efforts. It is clear—we have set a course that leaves no community behind, ensuring that the prosperity tourism

generates touches every Jamaican heart and home.

Yet, our work is not finished. A third term for this administration is not simply continuity. It is an opportunity to deepen and expand the achievements we have worked tirelessly for. It is our chance to build upon solid foundations and further amplify tourism's transformative power. With your continued support, we pledge to intensify investment in community tourism, strengthen local enterprises, foster sustainability, and ensure every Jamaican reaps the full rewards of our shared growth.

Together, we have already achieved so much, yet the best is yet to come. Let us move forward with unity, optimism, and resolve, fully committed to a Jamaica where everyone thrives, where dignity and prosperity are universal, and where tourism continues to be our nation's lifeblood and pride.

Thank you for your trust, your passion, and your unwavering commitment. Together, let's secure a brighter, stronger future for all Jamaicans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. May God continue to bless Jamaica, land we love.