

ADDRESS BY

HON. DARYL VAZ, M.P.

MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO

(LAND, ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE, INVESTMENT)

AT THE

PUBLIC FORUM ON CLIMATE CHANGE

***“ADAPTING TO CLIMATE RESILIENCE ACTION PLANS...MY
RESPONSIBILITY”***

AT THE

RIO NUEVO VILLAGE, RIO NUEVO, ST. MARY

ON

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2019 @ 3:00 P.M.

I must say how pleased I am to be participating in two events related to preserving our environment and building resilience to climate change in the same Parish, on the same day. It speaks to the importance of environmental preservation to the Member of Parliament, Hon. Robert Montague, the Parish Councillors, the Parish Development Committee and the people of St. Mary, on a whole.

Before coming here, I cut the ribbon for the Three Hills Farmers' Plastic Bottle Greenhouse, which, for me, was an uplifting moment and one that augurs well for reducing the impact of plastic waste on our beautiful island.

I am heartened by the innovation and creativity that went into constructing that greenhouse out of old plastic bottles. Indeed, it is my fondest hope that other rural communities will adopt the same

measures and build similar greenhouses. I know that I, for one, will be taking the word back to the farmers in Portland.

I should point out that the plastic bottle greenhouse initiative back at Three Hills is one way our farmers can adapt to climate change thereby ensuring not only their lives and livelihoods, but also the nation's food security.

The plastic bottles are light, durable and versatile and those qualities make them perfect for the construction of greenhouses, particularly in areas affected by extreme weather events such as drought with which many of us have become very familiar, as well as floods and other weather events that stem from the impacts of climate change.

I must once again thank the St. Mary Parish Development Committee for inviting me to address this public forum on Climate Change aptly titled **“Adapting to climate resilience action plans...my responsibility”**.

It is an unfortunate but very true fact that often it is only when we are directly affected, through water lock-offs as a result of drought conditions; or when the heat is unbearable, particularly during the summer months; or when we are preparing for hurricanes, that we give the impacts of climate change a second thought.

But it is our small farmers, whose lives and livelihoods are tied to what they produce on their small holdings, who are among the most vulnerable group in our society to its impacts, and perhaps, more than any other group, they are aware that the climate is changing.

In past years we could always look forward to the pattern of drought breaking during the month of May, but not this year.

Portland, and St. Mary which are traditionally known for above average rainfall patterns, are experiencing drought, which was unheard of!

Indeed, it is the western parishes that are now experiencing the kind of rainfall we used to experience here in the east.

Most rainfall models project decreases, especially by the end of the century. In addition, several studies have indicated that the frequency of storms may decrease, however the intensity of these hurricanes will increase with a doubling of the frequency of category 4 and 5 storms.

There is a new tagline that we must all adopt in the kind of future we are facing. Indeed, **“Smart and Steady – Get Climate Ready”** must be the words that we live by as a country, as we learn to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Studies have shown, and it has become quite clear, that worldwide current trends in energy use, development and population growth, will lead to continuing – and more severe – climate change.

The changing climate will certainly affect the basic requirements for maintaining healthy people and ecosystems. The impacts of climate change will affect all sectors. These impacts pose very serious risks for our critically endangered ecosystems, and sectors including agriculture, forestry, health, shelter, local economies, tourism and biodiversity.

In conjunction with other pressures, climate change impacts will likely exacerbate other serious local and regional challenges, such as poverty, poor healthcare, inequitable distribution of resources, diminishing ecological resiliency and energy insecurity.

These are issues that must be highlighted as they not only affect the efforts of the government to place the country firmly on a track to sustainable development, but they also affect the well-being as well as the quality of life and livelihoods of each and every Jamaican.

With this in mind, the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation through the Climate Change Branch, is in the process of updating the Climate Change Policy framework in keeping with recent developments at the regional and international levels, chief among them the agreements reached in Poland with the adoption of the Paris Agreement Work Programme.

In addition, there are several mechanisms available that provide assistance to Jamaica to integrate climate resilience into development planning.

They include the Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience (PPCR). The PPCR provides incentives for scaled-up action in regard to climate change, and creates a shift from “business as usual” to broad based strategies for achieving climate resilience at the national and regional levels.

Through the PPCR, our agencies and stakeholders have received, and will continue to receive strong financial and technical support.

An integral part of the programme is training for all climate change focal points across ministries as well as policy makers, which is ongoing.

We intend to create a similar framework at the Local Government level to facilitate an effective response to climate change adaptation and mitigation at the local level. In the process we will also ensure the priorities on the ground are informing policies, programmes and plans at the national level.

This is an important shift, as well as an important opportunity. Climate change is upon us, but rather dwelling on the negatives, we have the chance to begin talking, thinking and above all, acting to seize the opportunities that climate change can bring to us.

Long term energy and water efficiency; investment in improved agricultural techniques and forestry enterprises; supply chains and infrastructure that are resilient to disasters and climate change must be a part of our thinking and action going into the future.

I urge each and every Jamaican, to put the effort into acquiring and building the knowledge that will help us all to chart the best way forward.

As a Government, we cannot do it alone and so we invite everyone to come on board with us. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) estimates that more than 85% of all finance

to address climate change will eventually need to come from the society at large, particularly the private sector.

In our quest towards building climate resilience, we are receiving assistance from a number of our international partners and from financial mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund.

We recently held a consultation on the Green Climate Fund, aimed at facilitating private sector engagement with the Fund.

The aim was to increase knowledge of the Green Climate Fund modalities, processes and latest developments; and introduce participants to the opportunities available for financing climate action.

By convening this consultation we wanted to ensure that the experts from the GCF and all our participants shared knowledge and experience in leveraging the private sector in climate investments, and in

identifying some priority private sector initiatives to implement at the local and regional levels.

Members of the Private Sector were assured, and I want to assure you all as well, that you will have our total support, once you identify projects of scale that are addressing the threat posed by climate change and that can be presented to the Green Climate Fund.

There is a wealth of information on projections available in the Caribbean and at the country level.

Here in Jamaica we have the 2015 State of the Jamaican Climate Report, and the University of the West Indies is also working on a State of the Caribbean climate report which will prove quite useful in determining projects and programmes.

Nationally Designated Authorities such as the Climate Change Branch at the Ministry, are important links to the Green Climate Fund and therefore should be involved from concept to implementation to ensure that the process of project development is guided and on track to access the benefits.

We are willing to partner with anyone who has seen the need to build climate resilience into their planning for the future.

Where there is money available in making enterprises more resilient to climate change and where these fall within our national priorities, projects and proposals will receive the full backing of our Climate Change Branch.

I wish to reiterate that no Small Island Developing State can fund all the activities in a sustainable and meaningful response to climate change from their national budgets.

We can shape policy and we can craft solutions to ensure that climate change resilience is built into all sectors, but we cannot force our citizens to adapt to climate change or to mitigate against its impacts. That is something each and every one of us will have to commit to.

I also take this opportunity to provide you with an update on lands at Industry Pen, St. Mary – Volume 313, Folio 7.

The lands were slated for the Emancipation Lands project. Under this project, the Minister of Housing was responsible for the development of the Housing component under the Housing Act and the Ministry of Agriculture was to be consulted for implementation of the Agricultural component.

The decision has been made to do the following to deal with the Agricultural component by effecting transfer to the Commissioner of Lands for MICAF to deal with the titles with the Farmers Association.

Instructions to this effect have been issued.

With respect to the Housing component which has other issues to be resolved, the matter is being looked at in discussion with other agencies including the NHT, to come up with a comprehensive solution to recommend to Cabinet on the way forward.

We remain committed to resolving this matter.

In closing, I wish to thank you all for allowing me to address you today.

I look forward to hearing more about the Plastic Bottle Recycling Initiative for the Retreat Division, as well as the resilience building outcomes of the Plastic Bottle Greenhouse on the farmers of St. Mary.

Thank you for having me.

God bless you all!