



Speaking Notes

For

Mr. Omar Sweeney CD, PE

**Managing Director, Jamaica Social Investment Fund**

At

**Opening Ceremony of the Best Practices Symposium**

**LEI EXPO**

**2023**

On November 10, 2023

At Devon House

Kingston.

## **Salutations**

Master of Ceremonies Suzie P

Mrs. Sancia Templer-Bennett, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce (MIIC)

Mr. Kirk Philips Deputy Director General, Corporate Governance & Management Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ)

Dr. Dwayne Vernon Executive Director, Social Development Commission (SDC)

Miss Charmaine Brimm, Technical Specialist, Socio-Economic Development, Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ)

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my honor to welcome you all to the Best Practice Symposium Local Economic Initiatives, LEI, EXPO. This event is a celebration of the creativity, ingenuity, and hard work of the talented artisans in our community.

The Jamaica Social Investment Fund has long been an advocate and supporter of local businesses, through our Integrated Community Development Project, ICDP in both its first and now its second phase we have aided in boosting the businesses of hundreds of entrepreneurs in the communities that we serve.

At present, 475 small businesspersons in 8 communities across Jamaica have been the recipient of grants to improve their business through an investment in equipment and tools they use for their day-to-day operations. 65.5 million dollars has been pumped into this grant programme so far, this is a testament to the importance we place on improving the lives of local businesspersons and by extension communities. While under our Rural Economic Development Initiative project in its second

phase, REDI II, over 211 million dollars has been spent on 5041 farmers who are businesspersons in their own right.

Some of you who have benefited from the project are here today displaying your goods and services.

Those of you who have benefited under the ICDP II and REDI II as well as others from the Social Development Commission here today I salute you for the countless hours you put into your business.

As we explore the stalls and exhibits today, we will no doubt witness the passion and creativity that goes into every piece of product. Each item tells a story, not just of the artisan's skills, but also of their heritage, experiences, and the love they pour into their work. From handmade jewelry to textiles to footwear to Jamaican confectionaries, each product reflects the soul and character of its creator.

In addition to showcasing your work, this Expo is an opportunity to network, exchange ideas, and collaborate with fellow businesspersons. The power of collaboration can lead to new

innovations, markets, and opportunities that can elevate your small businesses to new heights.

I would like to encourage all of you to engage in meaningful conversations today, share your experiences, and learn from one another. The connections you make here can lead to new partnerships, ideas, and strategies that can help you grow and succeed in this competitive market.

This event is not just about showcasing your products; it's about celebrating the spirit of entrepreneurship, creativity, and resilience that defines each one of you. It's about acknowledging the vital role you play in our society and the economy, and the cultural richness you bring to our lives.

I want to express my gratitude to Planning Institute of Jamaica for partnering with us at JSIF and with other agencies and Ministries to make this Expo possible, and to all of you, the entrepreneurs, for being the heart and soul of this event.

Let us use this occasion as a steppingstone to greater success,  
and may your small businesses continue to flourish, bringing your  
incredible creations to people near and far.

Thank you, and let's make this Expo a success!