



Remarks By

Mr. Omar Sweeney, CD, PE.

Managing Director, Jamaica Social Investment Fund

at

Handing-Over Ceremony for the
Annotto Bay Coastal Protection Project
Friday, May 16, 2025, at 2:00 pm

Salutations:

- Master of Ceremonies, Miss Dahlia Harris
- Dr. The Most Honourable Andrew M. Holness, Prime Minister of Jamaica
- Honourable Robert Nesta Morgan, Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic, Growth and Job Creation with responsibility for Works and Member of Parliament for Clarendon North Central
- Dr. the Honourable Norman Dunn, Minister of State in the Ministry of Labour & Social Security and Member of Parliament for St. Mary South-Eastern
- Your Worship, the Mayor Councillor Fitzroy Wilson
- Dr. Wayne Henry, Chairman, Jamaica Social Investment Fund and other representatives from the JSIF Team.
- Ms. Lilia Buruncuic, Country Director for the Caribbean and other Representatives from The World Bank
- Representatives from the St. Mary Municipal Corporation
- Representatives from the National Works Agency
- Contractors of the Project, S & G Road Surfacing Material Limited
- Consultants of the Project, Smith Warner International
- Members of The Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon.

Today, we gather to celebrate a critical milestone in Jamaica's journey towards sound environmental and macroeconomic stability. The investment made here, and over the last **eight (8) years** under the **Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Project (DVRP)** reflects the new Jamaica that is investing to create a sustainable eco system for balanced national development.

I take this opportunity to identify some of what I will term **hard facts** related to our beautiful Jamaica.

- **Approximately 75% of our productive industries and services are within 5 km of the coastline.**
- **82% of our population are in townships along the coast**
- **Jamaica's economy, and population is in the highest globally with respect to GDP and population being vulnerable to at least two or more environmental hazards**

Indeed, it is an acknowledgement of these facts that underpinned the **Government of Jamaica's** partnership with **The World Bank** to initiate the **Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Project**. This was a **Thirty Million United States Dollars (US\$ 30 Million)** investment to improve Jamaica's resilience, and provided tangible inputs to:

- Improve Jamaica's ability to better identify environmental risk, and create systems for better risk information and planning

- Capital Investments in critical infrastructure that will reduce our vulnerability to adverse natural events such as Hurricanes, Earthquakes etc.

Supported by a strong technical team (Artesa et al) from The World Bank, JSIF was able to build several critical systems required for our resilience. These included the construction of three (3) Fire Stations, including a state-of-the-art Regional Office and Fire Station located on Barnett Street in Montego Bay. We have also built the Port Maria Fire Station which was also a significant investment in Jamaica's risk reduction infrastructure. Through DVRP, we also invested in several drainage systems, including the **Big Pond/Myton Gully Drainage system**, which we will officially open on **June 10, 2025**. Under the DVRP, we also completed the major revetment infrastructure works at Port Royal Street in Downtown, Kingston.

In addition to the infrastructure works completed, the DVRP also saw significant investment being channeled to building our risk information planning processes. This investment included over **J\$100 million** to build our **seismic research capacity through the UWI Earthquake Unit**, over **J\$40 million** in developing modern **building codes**, the development of the **National Risk Information Platform for (ODPEM)**, which is a **modern IT system** which is the newest repository of risk information in Jamaica with an investment of over **J\$70 million dollars**. We also engaged a leading Jamaican consulting firm, **Smith Warners International**, to conduct several environmental studies.

These studies were conducted on eight of Jamaica's coastal towns including Savanna la Mar, Ocho Rios, Alligator Pond and Manchioneal. These studies have given us a clear directional roadmap on where further investments are required.

Prime Minister, the DVRP was implemented between the period 2016-2024, which interestingly coincided with you being the Co-Chair along the Honourable Emanuel Macron, President of France of the Political Initiative to mobilize climate Financing to support the implementation of the Paris Agreement. **The US\$30 Million United States Dollars** invested through the **DVRP**, thus underscores sound governance, macroeconomic management and building sound environmental resilience.

As an Agency of the Government of Jamaica, JSIF remains resolute in our mandate to mobilize resources on behalf of the Government of Jamaica and in collaboration with other partners, to implement projects that focus on national priority infrastructure.

I must applaud the unwavering efforts of the Government of Jamaica and the support of The World Bank, which made it possible through a loan facility, for the funds to be accessed to finance the **Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Project, (DVRP)**.

Our efforts at the JSIF extend beyond infrastructure. We aim to empower communities by building resilience, fostering sustainable practices, and promoting environmental stewardship. The **JSIF's ISO 14001:2015 certification in Environmental Management** underscores our commitment to responsible development that protects our land and people.

For decades, Annotto Bay has battled moderate to severe shoreline erosion. Each high tide stole more sand. Each passing storm gnawed homes, businesses, and the vital fishing industry that sustains so many families. Climate change has only intensified these threats, turning what was once a gradual loss into an urgent crisis.

The Annotto Bay Shoreline Project was implemented at a cost of approximately **JMD\$ 235,000,000.00**. The scope of works undertaken for this project involved comprehensive beach nourishment, which saw the addition of fresh, clean sand to widen and elevate the beach, rebuilding the natural buffer between the sea and the community. Specially designed protection structures (Groynes)

were constructed to trap and hold sediment, locking the new beach in place and reducing future erosion.

[Video can be played here]

The Annotto Bay Coastal Protection project is more than aesthetics. It is a transformative initiative that will not only address the pressing issue of shoreline erosion but will also help to elevate the livelihoods of our fisherfolk and local businesses, while promoting sustainable development.

Today, I call upon every one of you—community members, local leaders, environmental advocates, and the youth to continue to protect, preserve, and champion our environment, to safeguard our coastal regions, and to work tirelessly to build a Jamaica that is resilient in the face of climate change.

Thank you for your attention. Here's to the beginning of a brighter, more resilient future for Annotto Bay.