

**Opening Statement on Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2015  
by Professor Trevor Munroe C.D.  
Executive Director, NIA  
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**CPI 2015: Jamaica Finally Making Progress, but Still Some Way to Go**

Let me first extend a warm welcome to representatives of the media and to some of NIA's partners who are present this morning. On behalf of NIA, I've invited you here to share Jamaica's standing in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2015, launched and released globally, last night (Jamaica Time) in Berlin. As you may know, the CPI is among the most authoritative publications on the issue of corruption and is constructed from assessments of experts, academics, business people, analysts and survey findings of international bodies like the World Bank. This CPI indicates, regrettably that corruption continues to be "public enemy number one" in the words of the UN Secretary General, a global scourge in which two-thirds of the 168 countries in the index score below 50 on a scale of zero to one hundred (where zero is perceived to be highly corrupt and 100 perceived to be very clean).

As regards Jamaica, the CPI 2015 results indicate that after nine (9) years of marking time and more-or-less standing still, Jamaica is now being perceived as moving forward in the combat of corruption and the building of integrity. The CPI 2015 shows Jamaica:

- Advancing 16 places from number 85 of 175 countries in 2014 to number 69 of 168 countries in 2015. For many years, successive CPIs have shown Jamaica stuck in the 8<sup>th</sup>

or 9<sup>th</sup> decile. It should be noted that only 11 of the 168 countries captured in the 2015 index improved their ranking by 16 or more places;

- Advancing from the rank of 14<sup>th</sup> of 31 countries in the Americas in 2014 to 7<sup>th</sup> of 26 in 2015, being in the top quartile for the first time in nine years. Previously, Jamaica has characteristically stalled in or near the bottom half of the ranking in the Americas.
- Advancing in score from 38 to 41 – of a maximum score of 100 – one of only 20 countries to improve their score by three or more points. No other country in the Americas made such an improvement.

There is obviously still some way to go for Jamaica, but NIA is pleased that our activities, along with that of our partners - in Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, in particular the Ministry of Justice and successive Justice Ministers; in Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Community Development Committees (CDCs) under the banner of the Social Development Commission (SDC), and including church bodies such as the Spanish Town Ministers' Fraternal; and in the Private Sector - is beginning to bear fruit after a period of blossoming. This was reflected in the Global Corruption Barometer 2013, which showed Jamaica significantly below the global average in terms of bribery; and similarly the LAPOP biennial studies which showed a significant decline from 36% in 2006 to 10% in 2014 of Jamaicans admitting to involvement in bribery, well below the global average of 27%.

This 2015 CPI movement is clearly attributable to a number of factors:

- More effective citizen demand for Government accountability and Government responsiveness, e.g. Changes in the NSWMA and NHT boards;
- Growing public awareness arising from the activity of NIA and partners in, for example, town hall meetings - with the ECJ around the need for Campaign Finance Reform and Integrity in Voting, and with the SDC in Community Development Conferences around the need for more accountability in Local Government;
- The impact of performance audit reports by the Auditor General (AG) and the Office of the Contractor General's (OCG) investigative reports, the latter recently exposing impropriety and corruption and promising punitive action in relation to the Hanover and St. Thomas Parish Councils;
- Intensified activity by the Major Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency (MOCA) in among other things, targeting police corruption and high-profile criminals also involved in corruption, as well as increasing the rate of convictions of those arrested;
- Very importantly, the passage and/or maturing of long-pending anti-corruption legislation. These include the Law Reform (Fraudulent Transaction) (Special Provisions) Act - known more commonly as the Lotto Scam Act, the outlawing of Ponzi Schemes, the provision for citizen oversight of Parish Councils through the Local Public Accounts Committees, Political Party Registration and Campaign Finance Reform – each measure with shortcomings, but nevertheless representing an advance in the combat of corruption.

Jamaica's movement in CPI 2015, despite the road ahead is therefore important for at least three reasons:

1. The advance enhance prospects for investment and job-creation in so far as the 2015-2016 Global Competitiveness Report, along with its predecessors, identifies corruption among the top four of sixteen "most problematic factors for doing business in Jamaica."
2. This step forward can begin to restore public confidence that more effective action is being taken against corruption. We should remember that in the RJR/TVJ Don Anderson polls of December 2014, Jamaicans identified "*corruption over the years as the main reason for hard times some Jamaicans are now facing*" ahead of "*harsh IMF terms.*"
3. This progress gives encouragement to NIA, its partners and all Jamaicans to renew and strengthen the call for more accountability, more transparency and more effective action against the corrupt by:
  - a. Insisting on the passage, in a timely fashion, of pending anti-corruption legislation (Integrity Commission Act) and the plugging of loopholes in existing laws,
  - b. Enhancing law enforcement and upholding the rule of law for all, particularly those who consider themselves above the law,
  - c. All of us working to strengthen culture-change amongst our citizens, the young in particular, to uphold the principle of integrity and to speak out against wrongs,
  - d. Deepening engagement with international partners in what is a global fight, since corruption knows no geographic boundaries.