Madame Chairperson, Grace Ann McFarlane, Custos of St James, Bishop the Honourable Conrad Pitkin, Honourable Minister of Justice, my friend, Delroy Chuck, Ambassador of the United States to Jamaica, His Excellency Donald Tapia, distinguished Justices of the Peace, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. It gives me very great pleasure to once again make remarks at another important training session for Justices of the Peace. I well recall the first engagement with JPs, under the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Minister and myself to strengthen Justice Sector Reform in Jamaica. That was in February in Buff Bay when we met with Justices of the Peace from Portland. Of course, prior to that from February 2017 to 2018 in sessions like this in Ocho Rios, Mandeville and Santa Cruz and subsequently, to our 2019 Memorandum of Understanding, the partnership between NIA and the Ministry and the Minister of Justice has seen us together in sensitisation sessions on Child Diversion in St. Mary, St. Catherine, St. Elizabeth, Manchester and training seminars in Restorative Justice and Alternative Dispute Resolution.
I want to congratulate the hard working teams from the Ministry of Justice and from NIA for the work put in in organising these sessions. We thank the Minister and the Ministry for their role in the continuing partnership. But most of all we once again thank the American people and government for assisting Jamaican and NIA with funding support from the CBSI through USAID, to help make our Justice System more efficient and effective. This programme is helping to advance our people and our country further on the journey to self-reliance, to achieve our National Development Goal for a safe and just society and to enhance the security of the US southern border.

Ambassador Tapia, please convey our gratitude to the US Government and people and our hope that this support shall continue.

May I also add a word of appreciation to the Ambassador who a few days ago, addressing the Banquet of the Montego Bay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in this very Centre, stated his strong belief “that the US private sector can lead the way to increase investment” in Jamaica and that the improvement in the fundamentals of our economy, the reduction of red tape and regulatory barriers,
achieved across successive administrations, is making it a lot easier “for more foreign investors to become attracted to Jamaica”. We too acknowledge this important achievement and look forward to the anticipated additional investments.

**However, there are two remaining obstacles to investment which touch on the mission both of Justices of the Peace and of National Integrity Action, to reform the Justice System to deal more effectively with the twin obstacles of crime and corruption, to investigate, apprehend, prosecute and jail the criminals and the corrupt.** The Jamaican people recognize these obstacles, 78 percent of them believe that corruption is a serious problem in government. Successive governments have also recognised these obstacles and declared their determination to eradicate them, but our people feel that Government needs to do more. Our international partners are also pointing to how crime and corruption are hurting the Jamaican people. For example, the **Global Competitiveness Report** ranks seventy odd countries as more competitive than Jamaica and that crime and corruption are among the greatest problems to doing business and to keeping away investors. The **International Monetary Fund** while celebrating Jamaica’s achievement in May 2019 warned “Jamaica fares relatively poorly on corruption related measures…weak governance and corruption can…undermine macroeconomic and financial stability, private and public investment and the rule of law”. And each year our US partners, through the
International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, remind us that while anti-corruption policy is good, Jamaica is failing and has “a poor record” to successfully prosecute, convict and jail high level officials and facilitators of organised crime and corruption.

It is to help to fix these shortcomings that NIA has partnered with the Ministry of Justice with the aim of reforming our justice system, of training, mobilising and motivating you and thousands of JPs across Jamaica to intensify your role as soldiers in the army of integrity. You are already recruits. I remind you that to be appointed a Justice of the Peace, the Governor General has to be satisfied that you are “of unquestionable integrity…and command the respect and confidence of your community”. More so, our Head of State has to be convinced that you have given “good service to the community and wider Jamaica” and “demonstrate the potential of continuing to serve”. Now more than ever is the time Jamaica is calling you to demonstrate that unquestionable integrity, that continuing service, that discharge of your responsibilities to avoid “partisan, political influences” as you are enjoined to do by your Code of Conduct.
We too in NIA are called upon by Jamaica’s current challenges to intensify our work to build “a Jamaica…of integrity”, our mission “to combat corruption” and to practice our principles of “integrity and impartiality”.

In carrying forward these objectives we have supported not only the training of Justices of the Peace, but of officials at other levels in the justice system, in particular, investigators from the JCF, functionaries in the courts and prosecutors. In fact, you should note that between 2017 and 2018 we have engaged over 250 police investigators and prosecutors in anti-gang training. We in NIA are now encouraged to see the beginning of the fruits of this training and protracted advocacy for significant changes in governance. For example, in governance, we are pleased that Minister Nigel Clarke laid in Parliament on November 26, significant proposals to reduce partisanship and misconduct on public boards by basing selections, nominations and approval of Board Members more on the basis of merit and with continuity across administrations. Secondly, we are encouraged to see the backlog in our courts now being slowly cleared, with the achievement of a case clearance rate of 103 per cent on November 30, 2019, which means that for every 100 cases coming in 103 are cleared. Thirdly, later this month, Black Man along with 45
members of his gang will appear in court on December 19. Next month members of the King’s Valley gang, based largely in Westmoreland, will be brought before the courts and a verdict is due to be handed down in relation to the recent trial of the Uchence Wilson gang and of course, we have been encouraged by the recent conviction of Tesha Miller a leader of the Clansman gang in St. Catherine. May I use this opportunity to congratulate the investigators, prosecutors, judicial officers, jurors who are coming forward to reduce crime and corruption and enhance citizen security and safety.

Ladies and gentlemen, Jamaica has been standing still for too long in this combat of crime and corruption. The Global Corruption Perception Index for 2019, due to be published next month, is unlikely to show any significant gains. But the signs are that 2020 can be a turning point if you do your job in the communities and we intensify our work particularly among the youth and across the country. I commend to you two areas to strengthen your contributions. Firstly, by improving community organisations like Neighbourhood Watch, Citizens Associations, Police Youth Clubs and Integrity Clubs in the schools. Secondly, use CrimeStop more fully by yourselves and encouraging other citizens to do likewise. In the first nine months of
2016/2017, CrimeStop was receiving 100 calls per month, in a similar period 2018/2019, that increased to 200, with more arrests, seizures of contraband and weapons and payment of rewards as a result of these anonymous tips. You should know that CrimeStop paid out $8 Million in rewards for tips in the first eleven months of 2019, that is four times more than in the same period for 2017. Use the other hotlines as well, to MOCA, to the Auditor General’s office, to NIA as each of us does our part in dealing more effectively with corruption and violent crime. We are confident that you shall answer the call and we appeal to our Jamaican business sector, to our international partners, particularly people of the United States, represented here by Ambassador Tapia, to the European Union and to our Canadian friends, not only to sustain but to enhance their support for the Departments and Agencies of the Ministry of Justice and to National Integrity Action as we work towards our mutual objective of enhancing the safety, progress and prosperity of the Jamaican people and strengthening the security of the US southern border. As our Governor General says and we thoroughly agree, there is nothing wrong with Jamaica that cannot be fixed by what is right with Jamaica and with the collaboration of our international partners.