

**Opening Statement on Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2019
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CPI 2019 – Jamaica’s Slippage Backwards Continues

I would first of all like to welcome members of the Press and media present as well as representatives of organisations with which NIA has been associated in its mission of strengthening integrity and combatting corruption. I particularly appreciate your presence because of the very short notice you received and because of so many competing priorities, not least of all associated with yesterday’s completed visit of US Secretary of State as well as the high profile crime and corruption trials now underway in the courts.

What is the CPI?

Before looking at Jamaica’s Corruption Perception Index score and rank for 2019 allow me to say a few words about the CPI itself. The Corruption Perception Index draws on and is a composite of thirteen data sources from twelve independent institutions specialising in governance and business climate analysis. For a country to be included in the CPI in any year, at least three of these independent institutions shall have had to provide a score over the previous two years for that particular country. In Jamaica’s case seven of the thirteen institutions provided a score on the basis of which the composite was calculated. These are: **The Economist Intelligence Unit, The Global Insight Country Risk Ratings, The World Economic Forum, The World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, The PRS International Country Risk Guide, The Varieties of Democracy Project, and The Bertelsmann Foundation Transformation Index.**

Each of these sources and surveys of experts ask the respondents questions which are based on carefully designed and calibrated questionnaires. Transparency International experts in Berlin simply compile and aggregate the scores for each individual country to arrive at a composite. **No individual chapter of Transparency International determines or even influences the score or the ranking for that particular country. Hence neither, Trevor Munroe nor National Integrity Action influences or determines Jamaica's CPI as has been absurdly alleged in some ridiculous social media posts.** The second observation I would like to make is that the CPI measures perception and not necessarily reality because corruption generally comprises deliberately hidden, illegal activities which only come to light in scandals, investigations or prosecutions. Measuring any of those may simply be an indicator of the capacity or lack thereof of investigators, journalists or prosecutors, and not the extent of actual corruption. **Hence the CPI deliberately measures how corrupt a country's public sector is perceived by experts and remains the most widely used indicator of corruption worldwide.**

Jamaica's CPI Position

In Jamaica's case the CPI over the years has placed the country among the two thirds of countries in the world who score under 50, where 100 is the least corrupt and zero the most corrupt. Correspondingly the country has ranked near the bottom half of states measured. Within that generally unsatisfactory zone, there have been improvements and slippages over the last five years. **The 2015 CPI showed an improvement (under a PNP administration) on the previous CPI 2014. The CPI 2016 showed a decline in both score and rank, the year of transition from a PNP to a JLP administration. CPI 2017, the first full year under a Jamaica Labour Party administration, showed significant improvement.** NIA's

statement on CPI 2017 welcomed “Jamaica’s improvement in score (from 39 to 44 on a scale of zero to 100) and the jump upwards by fifteen places (from 83 of 176 countries in 2016 to 68 of 180 countries in 2017)...this performance appears to be the best in score and rank over the last ten years with the possible exception of 2015”. We warned then against complacency and self-congratulation and called for a number of measures “to bring all hands on deck to prevent regression and to sustain this gain”. This was not to be. **The CPI 2018 registered “Jamaica slipping backwards globally and standing still locally”.** The just released **CPI 2019 now registers continued slippage backwards globally and marginal decline locally. In actual numbers Jamaica’s CPI 2019 score is 43 compared to 44 in 2018 and its ranking has fallen four places from number 70 to 74 of 180 countries. Our country, on this basis, is perceived as being the third most corrupt of nine states from the Caribbean community in CPI 2019.** A quick review of 2019 provides us with insight into this worsening perception.

Contributing to CPI 2019 Slippage

- March 2019 – Resignation of Minister of Education Ruel Reid in the context of corruption related allegations – no reason offered despite enquiries
- April 2019 – Investigation Report into sale of “Rooms on the Beach” by the Office of the Contractor General alleging improper use of Ministerial influence.
- May 2019 – the first press conference, after 14 months of the newly established Integrity Commission. It emerges in that conference that the Prime Minister’s statutory declaration has not been “cleared”.
- July 2019 – the first Annual Report of the Integrity Commission is published. In that report it is stated that two members of Parliament are under

investigation (by the Financial Investigations Unit) but their names are not disclosed. Additionally, the Report (page 33) stated that the investigation into Petrojam has been completed and is being referred to the Director of Corruption Prosecutions. Since then there has been no disclosure regarding the consequences of this referral.

- August 2019 – Retirement of the Director of Corruption Prosecutions from the Integrity Commission following on differences between the Commissioners and the DCP regarding the “Rooms on the Beach” Report. No reason offered for retirement by the retiree.
- August 2019 – Controversy regarding the content of the Statutory Declaration of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in so far as the declarations only indicated the “purchase price” and not the “estimated current market value of immovable property’ held by declarant, spouse and children as indicated in the third schedule of the Integrity Commission Act.
- September 2019 – the Chairman of the Integrity Commission resigns – no explanation offered. Controversy surrounds the appointment of a new Commissioner.
- October 2019 – the Campaign Expenditure Report of the political parties contesting the April 2019 East Portland by-election become due. No indication given then as to whether the timeline required by law has been met nor were the campaign expenditure reports published.
- October 2019 - The Government proposes to extend the period for withholding Cabinet documents from 20 to 70 years; proposal is withdrawn after public outcry.
- October 2019 – Former Minister Reid arrested and charged with corruption related offences.

Very significantly, for the entire year regulations to bring into operation and make independent of the JCF, the Major Organised Crime Agency, are anticipated but are not tabled.

Taken together in respect of Jamaica’s anti-corruption regime, these developments heighten the perception of inadequate transparency, deficient accountability and ineffective institutional arrangements.

These perceptions would have been reinforced by observations made in the April 5th, **IMF** Board Review of Jamaica’s Standby Agreement, that Jamaica has “serious shortcomings in the governance of public bodies” which lead to “weak governance and corruption [that] can severely hamper economic growth”. In that context, there was failure to promptly implement the IMF’s recommendation to “increase staff at the Integrity Commission quickly, so it can properly execute its investigative and prosecutorial functions”. The **Global Corruption Barometer** (published in September 2019) also found “in a survey conducted between January and March 2019 that fifty percent of Jamaican people believe that corruption had gotten worse in the last year prior to the survey and an equal number were of the opinion that Government is handling the fight against corruption badly”.

Nevertheless, there were factors pointing in the opposite direction, mitigating more negative perceptions.

- The inception in February 2019 and the execution of a robust and comprehensive programme of Justice Sector Reform under an MOU

Agreement signed between National Integrity Action and the Ministry of Justice.

- The coming into effect of the Procurement Act in April.
- Quantitative data showing that the backlog in Jamaica's courts was now being slowly cleared with the achievement of a case clearance rate of 103 percent on November 30, 2019.
- The continued effectiveness in exposing improprieties of offices such as the Auditor General and Parliamentary Committees charged with monitoring public finances and probity in the management of public institutions.

Nevertheless, the balance between factors aggravating and mitigating Jamaica's corruption landscape in 2019 has led to the continued slippage backwards global ranking and a decline in anti-corruption score.

Going Forward in 2020

To arrest and reverse this decline in 2020 requires a broad coalition for integrity – comprising civil society organisations, the private sector, the church, the media, public officials – including politicians of integrity – the “man-in-the-street” to insist on:

1. Immediate tabling in Parliament of long pending regulations to bring the MOCA into operation fully independent of the JCF
2. The public disclosure of the Petrojam Investigation Report and, thereafter, action by the DCP of the Integrity Commission
3. Early Parliamentary approval of the new regulations to reduce partisan political influence on the selection of Boards of public entities.

4. The prioritisation of the trial of former Minister Reid et al. It cannot be acceptable that the resolution of this matter drags on for six years as was the case with former Minister Kern Spencer
5. The immediate establishment and operationalisation of the Parliamentary Committee to provide oversight of the Integrity Commission as a critical first step to giving the Integrity Commission a “fresh start”, including review of the Integrity Commission Act to allow greater transparency in its operation
6. Prompt commencement of public awareness building and the scrupulous application of campaign finance regulations in relation to the forthcoming elections
7. The enforcement of the sections of the Procurement Act which require restitution of losses to the public purse by public officers responsible
8. Expeditious completion of natural consensus program in reducing crime and violence, including anti-corruption measures.