

PRESS RELEASE
DECEMBER 9, 2020

NATIONAL INTEGRITY ACTION
UN INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION DAY MESSAGE

On this UN International Anti-Corruption Day 2020, coinciding with our 9th Anniversary, National Integrity Action (NIA) joins with other integrity advocates in Jamaica, the region and globally, in strengthening our endeavours to combat corruption more effectively and - in the words of the 2020 theme - to *'Recover with Integrity'*.

In this context, we note that Jamaica, and the Jamaican people, have made some advances, though there remains a long way to go on the road to integrity. Arising from the work of NIA, other civil society bodies, public organisations such as the Integrity Commission, and the general citizenry, we note and appreciate the following: -

- The rate of bribery, otherwise called bribery victimization, has declined significantly in Jamaica, and the Americas Barometer 2019 records that Jamaica has made the most progress over the last ten years amongst 18 countries in this hemisphere, in reducing bribery;
- Similarly, tolerance of bribery amongst our people has declined from 57% in 2006 to 27% in 2017;
- At the same time, a majority of Jamaicans - some 59% from different walks of life and persuasions - now state their willingness to get involved in the fight against corruption;
- The incidents of investigative journalistic exposures of wrongdoing are clearly increasing.

At the same time however, NIA and others have to redouble our efforts to cover the remaining distance in both enforcement and strengthening of anti-corruption legislation. In this regard, recent exposures, particularly at the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC), reveal that there is need for strengthening the Protected Disclosures Act (Whistleblower Legislation) as was recommended by the peer review carried out by the OAS team in 2018. Equally, more public awareness is needed of the protections against victimization embodied in this law. These two measures would encourage, not intimidate, employees in both the public and private sectors who see wrong to report it – with less fear of reprisal. Concurrently, we insist that the time has come and gone for the repeal of the outdated and archaic Official Secrets Act (1911), now being used as a tool of intimidation, especially since a Joint Select Committee of Parliament – with both sides of the house represented – recommended in 2011 that this colonial relic be repealed.

NIA also urges that, particularly at this time when Jamaica needs to ensure that our people get value for every single taxpayer dollar, those public bodies who are in breach of the Public Bodies Management Accountability Act - which requires annual reports (including audited financials) to be laid before Cabinet, Parliament and the people - be punished in accordance with the law, so that this delinquency may be rectified.

On this International Anti-Corruption Day 2020, we also call on the Government to implement in accordance with the signed **Consensus on Crime and Violence**, two of the measures due to be passed through Parliament in this very month. First of all, the passage of the regulations relating to the selection, nomination and appointment of members of boards of directors of public bodies, to enhance appointments based on merit and to reduce cronyism and nepotism in the leadership of such bodies, which contributes to irregular practices as well as wastage of public funds. Secondly, we urge that the regulations to enable the full independence of the Major Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency (MOCA) be completed, as agreed, before the end of December.

NIA believes that these actions on the part of the authorities would be a fitting sequel to International Anti-Corruption Day 2020 and help to restore declining trust in important national institutions, thereby contributing to the post-COVID 19 objective to '*Recover with Integrity*'.

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