

**United Nations Joint Programme: *Strengthening Human Resilience in Northern Clarendon and West Kingston***

Programme Launch Event  
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*Remarks By:*  
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Minister McKenzie,  
Resident Coordinator Pouezat,  
Excellencies,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my profound pleasure to be with you today to launch the first human security programme in Jamaica. I would like to acknowledge the leadership of the Government of Jamaica and the United Nations system for addressing the complex nexus between climate change, natural hazards and sustainable development through the human security approach.

This initiative entitled *Strengthening Human Resilience in Northern Clarendon and West Kingston* would not have been possible without their vision. Nor would it have been possible without the dedication of a broad network of stakeholders from the national Government, to Parish and Municipal authorities, community-based organizations and local communities, to all of whom we are truly most grateful.

Indeed, as demonstrated by this programme, to address today's multidimensional and interconnected challenges, particularly for Island States, like Jamaica, who bear the brunt of climate change and its negative impact, commitments to promote genuine partnerships by pooling resources and expertise is what is required if we are to go beyond short-term fixes and plant the seeds for sustainable solutions.

Therefore, allow me to reiterate how proud we are to support this endeavour and to join efforts with the UN system in Jamaica, and most notably, the Government of Jamaica, towards a shared vision for an inclusive, climate-resilient and sustainable development in Northern Clarendon and West Kingston.

Excellencies,

Climate change and its interactions with other insecurities is one of the most pressing issues of our time. Over the past 30 years, the number of climate-related disasters has continued to rise, resulting in an unprecedented level of strain on our planet and prosperity.

Across the Caribbean region, Governments and people have been particularly hard hit by the increasing frequency and intensity of natural hazards.

Combined with the tragic loss of life and economic destruction, climatic fluctuations, environmental degradation, and extreme weather patterns, disrupt harvests, deplete fisheries, erode livelihoods, and increase the spread of infectious diseases.

Vulnerable groups are particularly at risk, not only from the immediate impacts of natural disasters, but also from knock-on risk factors, such as, displacement and migration.

Climate change is also a “threat multiplier”, particularly in situations where the loss of land, together with persistent poverty, displacement and other insecurities, trigger competition over increasingly scarce resources that often intensify into societal tensions.

Indeed, with its indiscriminate assault on the survival, livelihood and dignity of people – the essential concerns of human security – natural disasters, coupled with the transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, remind us of the urgency to better manage risks and build the resilience of communities and nations threatened by climate change and natural hazards.

Colleagues,

The human security approach, based on the common understanding agreed to by the UN General Assembly in 2012, underscores the need for protection and empowerment strategies that are people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented.

Well-suited to the multifaceted challenges of natural disasters, the human security approach highlights the interconnected and the cross-sectoral consequences of climate change and its impact on the different components of people's lives.

It advocates for a broader and more people-centred and preventative approach. It underscores the importance of comprehensive and multi-sectoral solutions that engage all stakeholders. And it highlights the need to strengthen cooperation in order to build local and national resilience.

Human security means that international, national and local actors can better prioritise responses to consider the multitude of risks that may derail our progress towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

By being comprehensive, the human security approach combines our collective actions to promote sustainable development and build resilient communities.

It offers an invaluable framework to identify and unpack the differentiated consequences, and the compounding magnitude, of climate-related threats on people and their communities, as well as, the State, its institutions, and their capacity to deliver.

As such, human security drills down to ascertain the root causes of people's vulnerabilities, and considers risk drivers, beyond climate change, such as, persistent poverty, rapid urbanization, lack of access to social services, and fragile infrastructure in order to help ensure that development gains are sustained, and are not reversed when disasters hit.

Finally, the human security approach, in recognizing the scope, complexity and sheer interconnectedness of the challenges we face, provides a framework to break down siloes and bring together all relevant stakeholders, including the most affected communities, towards multidimensional strategies that simultaneously address social, economic and environmental risks, consequences and responses.

Excellencies,

As you know best and far better than I do, Caribbean countries and other island States face unique characteristics and vulnerabilities with regards to sustainable development.

Their small size and exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks, call for a contextually relevant approach.

Sustainable and equitable development in this context therefore requires strong coordination across institutions and stakeholders ... a balanced approach that recognizes the multiplier effects of climate change and natural hazards on development, and promotes integrated actions that shift our focus towards managing risks, mitigating their impact, and preventing their occurrence, whenever possible.

As such, the Trust Fund has supported numerous programmes addressing the intersection of climate change and sustainable development. We have done this in diverse situations – from drought affected communities in Southern Lesotho, where an estimated 70% of the population is solely dependent on agriculture; to disaster-prone and distressed urban communities in Haiti; to the Pacific Island countries, such as Vanuatu, whose very existence is under threat as a result of climate change.

Through these programmes and the human security approach, policymakers are reminded of the complex interactions between climate change, natural disasters and their impact on their societies.

In western Rwanda, for example, where the local population is faced with recurring natural disasters, the Trust Fund is working to promote climate-resilient livelihoods; improve food security; strengthen early warning mechanisms; build sustainable settlements; and enhance the health care and sanitation services of those most vulnerable.

By placing people at the centre of analysis, the human security approach helps to assess the needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of people and communities in a disaggregated manner. This allows for a more detailed understanding of the level, trend and distributions of risks among groups, communities and regions.

Subsequently, more targeted and evidence-based protection and empowerment strategies are established to reinforce the development of early warning mechanisms and improve the resilience of those most vulnerable.

As such, human security strategies place emphasis on the development of community-based adaptation and mitigation plans in order to address gaps in national, regional and international strategies; mobilize people; strengthen resilience; and protect livelihoods.

Moreover, effective community-based plans can form the basis for larger-scale disaster risk reduction strategies and the mainstreaming of such strategies into national development plans.

Accordingly, in the Andean region of Peru, a human security focused assessment meant a deeper analysis of the needs of the local population and the existing capacities of community-based organizations and local institutions.

Overlooked by previous initiatives, traditional approaches and locally sourced materials were subsequently integrated into the country's disaster prevention plans. As a result, risk management technologies were modified in accordance with local conditions and agricultural practices that were better targeted to the specific situation of remote and mountainous communities, and thus were better able to respond to and strengthen their resilience.

The human security approach is also prevention-oriented; underlining the importance of ongoing investments in disaster risk reduction.

As many drivers of climate change go beyond the response capacity of individual countries and communities, partnerships are essential to tempering their impact; addressing their root causes; and sustaining political commitment.

Notably, the human security approach recognises that insecurities must be tackled together in terms of UN support. Accordingly, all programmes under the Trust Fund require an integrated response, often including several UN entities; thereby combining expertise; accelerating delivery; limiting duplication; and maximising the reach of scarce resources.

And finally, the human security approach capitalises on the comparative advantages of a diverse network of stakeholders. Actors in support of human security programmes include Governments, local communities, civil society, regional and international organizations, and more recently, the international private sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Based on lessons learned to date, we are confident that the programme in Northern Clarendon and West Kingston will successfully leverage the human security approach towards a new way of advancing progress on Jamaica's Vision 2030.

By taking an integrated approach to improve water, sanitation, and natural resource management, the programme will create synergies of expertise towards environmentally sustainable livelihoods. At the same time, by addressing the root causes of vulnerabilities, the programme promotes concrete improvements in the daily lives of the people of this beautiful country. And, by linking elements of protection, inclusion and empowerment, the programme provides useful insights and mechanisms for combining policy and community-level efforts to realize the ambitious outcomes outlined in Vision 2030.

It is therefore our hope that this programme will provide practical guidance on how the United Nations system can strengthen its integrated support to disaster prone communities in their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

To this end, we look forward to supporting you and the people of West Kingston and Northern Clarendon on this journey. We commit to amplifying your successes and the lessons learned from this programme. And we stand ready to advance a more sustainable future where people can live in dignity, prosperity and resilience, with no one left behind.

I thank you for your attention.