



# **SECTORAL PRESENTATION**

**HON. DR. FENTON FERGUSON, DDS, MP  
MINISTER OF HEALTH**

**Tuesday, June 25, 2013**

**'CREATING SYSTEMS OF EXCELLENCE: ADVANCING THE  
HEALTH AGENDA FOR ALL'**

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## **Acknowledgements**

Mr. Speaker, this year I celebrated twenty years as a member of this honourable House. I am proud to have been selected as the servant of the people. I thank my constituents of Eastern St. Thomas for their loyalty and trust. I am also grateful to the Most Honourable Prime Minister for the confidence that she has shown in giving me such a critical Ministry to lead. I assure her that she will not get less than my best efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I could not have achieved as much as I have in the past two years were it not for the support of the hard working and dedicated team at the Ministry of Health, agencies and Regional Health Authorities. I thank Permanent Secretary, Dr. Jean Dixon for her leadership. I also thank the Boards of all the health entities led by committed chairpersons and the staff of each entity for skilfully turning vision into reality.

Our efforts were boosted with the assistance of our Development Partners and on behalf of the people of Jamaica I thank them for their continued service.

In addition I must acknowledge the Governments of Cuba, Spain, Japan, France and Argentina for the tremendous support given to the Ministry of Health to help us in some of the most challenging periods.

I also take this opportunity to recognize private and non-government organisations in Jamaica that continue to support the work of the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Speaker, I have to also recognise my Councillors, Caretaker, PD Workers and supporters who by their hard work and loyal support have ensured that as of March 30 2013, I completed 20 uninterrupted years as their MP and in the process took the record of being the longest serving MP for St Thomas since Universal Adult Suffrage in 1944, surpassing the record of LG Newland who had served for 19 years 11 months and 28 days.

Mr. Speaker, I must extend heartfelt thanks also to the Constituency leadership and those supporters and Friends of Eastern St. Thomas for the Banquet honouring me on March 30, 2013, for this historic achievement, and the thanksgiving church service which was held in Port Morant on June 2, 2013.

I also wish to thank the Diaspora for the sustained and tangible support they have given to Eastern St. Thomas.

Most importantly, I am grateful for the unwavering support I have received over the years from my family and particularly the influence of my dear mother that has made me into the man I am today, a man of whom I am sure she is proud.

### **Constituency of Eastern St. Thomas**

Mr. Speaker we have achieved much in my constituency over the past year. Plans are underway to transform the Bath Community into a kind of Wellness Zone incorporating the Botanical Gardens and the Hot Springs. The development of the Sports and Fitness Park at the nearby Sports Field - all supplemented by the healthy fruits, juices and foods produced from Bath, Ginger Hall and surrounding Communities - is also on the agenda.

Mr. Speaker, the vision is that visitors to Bath, looking for comfort and healing in the hot springs, can also avail themselves of natural foods and juices, and exercise their way into to a healthier lifestyle as well.

Mr. Speaker, with funding from the Sugar Transformation Programme, we are undertaking an extensive drain cleaning exercise in flood prone areas of the Plantain Garden River and through the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries we have begun the process of establishing an Agro Park on lands formerly occupied by Eastern Banana. I want to thank the Hon. Minister, Roger Clarke and his Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to indicate that we have been able to assist 100 fisher folk with credit assistance to the tune of \$16,000 each to purchase fishing gear lost or damaged during Hurricane Sandy again, Mr. Speaker through the kind assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Mr. Speaker it is my intention in 2013/2014 to give special focus to water and land related matters right across the constituency. Last year Titles were issued for several parcels of land in Dumfries falling under Operation PRIDE. This year we propose to issue Titles to beneficiaries in Donaldson. In this regard I want to thank Ministers Dr. Omar Davies and Dr. Morais Guy.

We have begun work on close to 300 Sugar Worker housing solutions at Hampton Court, and Golden Grove, whilst Bell Rock in Duckenfield with 20 additional units will be financed by the National Housing Trust. Again I want to thank the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Under the Sugar Transformation Programme we have started and will complete the Lyssons Sport Facility.

Mr. Speaker, the greatest allocation from my Constituency Development Fund has historically been to education and this has not changed. This past year, we committed support to infrastructure upgrade, equipment, scholarships, school appliances, and assistance to needy students.

I have to pause here to thank the Friends of Eastern St Thomas – Jamaica and New York Chapters and other benefactors who have been quietly assisting as they too recognise that we cannot do it alone. This year, Mr. Speaker through the CDF and their assistance, we will be able to provide grants for teacher study upgrade, as well as the **Dr. Fenton Ferguson Scholarship** for Teachers valued at **\$60,000** each. I will also be

continuing the Award of **\$10,000 each** for the GSAT Top Performing Boy and Girl, from the 21 Primary School and the annual **Luncheon in their honour**.

In the matter of road infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, the most anticipated project is the commencement of the Southern Coastal Highway, running from Harbour View through St. Thomas to Port Antonio. Design Works have been completed and Stakeholder consultations are underway.

I think I can safely say Mr. Speaker that the best is yet to come for Eastern St. Thomas.

### **Introduction**

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry continues to formulate policies and programmes to reach the goal of a healthy and stable population.

As part of my commitment to secure the health and wellbeing of the people of Jamaica, the Ministry of Health has crafted a Strategic Business Plan which takes into account our National Development Plan Vision 2030, this Administration's Manifesto and international treaties and agreements such as the Millennium Development Goals in which we commit to ensuring access to affordable health care without compromising the quality of care.

We have developed an Operational Plan for 2013-2014 in the context of this Strategic Plan. The Ministry has made progress in achieving the indicated health goals including improving services to the people and we have just started on a programme to upgrade the physical infrastructure of the public health sector. I have visited a number of the facilities and have seen firsthand the conditions and had the opportunity to assess the quality of services. I am very aware of the needs Mr. Speaker!

While we continue to put as much resources as possible into the health sector, we are cognizant of the limitations we face given the environment of scarce resources, shrinking budgets in the public and private sectors and the IMF conditionalities.

Health was front and centre in the discussions with the IMF team. As the country negotiated for an Extended Fund Facility, the social sector was critical to the sign-off by the multilateral partner. The Ministry has taken a proactive approach to implement the strategies under the agreement. I urge all of us in the health sector to band together and do our part to ensure that Jamaica satisfies the obligations – we are all in this thing together!

### **Achievements of the Ministry of Health 2012-2013**

Mr. Speaker, during the past year, we have been hard at work with the support of my team and together we were able to bring a number of projects to completion. I have made a Ministry Paper available to this honourable House, which will be tabled today and which outlines our programme of work and accomplishments in detail but allow me to present a quick summary of some of our achievements.

#### ***Child & Adolescent Hospital***

We have now received the concept paper for the Child and Adolescent Hospital in Western Jamaica. We will be submitting this to the Development Bank of Jamaica to invite private participation after internal review.

#### ***Infrastructure improvements***

Mr. Speaker infrastructure upgrade was done to the tune of more than \$375 million on hospitals including St. Ann's Bay Regional, Annotto Bay, Princess Margaret, Black River, Mandeville Regional, Bustamante, Bellevue, Cornwall Regional and Savanna-la-mar.

Mr. Speaker I have to thank the National Health Fund, the Government of Japan, China Harbour Engineering Company, the RJR Group and others who supported the reconstruction of Annotto Bay Hospital after hurricane Sandy. We are moving Annotto Bay Hospital along the path to becoming a Type B facility.

Mr. Speaker, ground was broken in February to begin construction of the over \$140 million Cardiac Wing at the Bustamante Hospital for Children. This will make the hospital the only one in the English Speaking Caribbean with a specialist cardiac facility for children. Digicel, Sagicor and Chain of Hope are among the partners which have made this venture possible.

### ***Equipment Performance Taskforce***

Last year, I announced that I had put in place an Equipment Performance Taskforce (EPTF) to develop a framework for the optimal use of medical equipment and to help to standardize on equipment procurement. **I am happy to announce that the Taskforce has achieved a number of its objectives.**

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Chairman, Mr. Ernest Smith and members of the EPTF for the efficient and enthusiastic approach to carrying out the mandate which I have given to them.

### ***Equipment Acquisition***

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to announce that new X-ray machines are being procured for the Princess Margaret, Annotto Bay, May Pen and Mandeville Regional Hospitals.

### ***Primary Healthcare Centres of Excellence***

Work has commenced on establishing four Centres of Excellence in primary healthcare. Work is far advanced on the physical structure on three – Isaac Barrant in St. Thomas, Darliston in Westmoreland and Santa Cruz in St. Elizabeth. Cabinet has approved the

award of the contract for the renovation of the fourth - the Claremont health centre in St. Ann and work should begin very soon.

### ***Primary Health Care Infrastructure Improvement Project***

This year we completed work on twenty (20) health centres at a cost of \$54.8 million. We have so far renovated over one hundred (100) health centres under this programme. I want to thank the member for South East Clarendon, Ruddy Spencer for starting this process and assure him that I have made it better and will continue to make it better.

### ***Motor Vehicle Acquisition***

**Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that 17 ambulances were purchased at a cost of US\$884,323 for distribution across all Health Regions. We expect delivery of these units to begin by the end of July.**

Since I took office in January 2012, we have purchased a total of fifty six (56) vehicles to support various areas including mental health, vector control and emergency medical services.

### ***National Health Information System***

We are moving from a strictly paper based system of storing health records to electronic storage and retrieval of patient data. Mr. Speaker, last year we promised that the National Health Information System Strengthening and e-Health Strategy for the 4-year period 2013-2017 would be completed by December 2012. **I am happy to announce that we have also kept that promise.** The implementation for the first year began in April 2013 with a number of activities being undertaken in accordance with the Strategy.

### ***Cuban Medical Personnel***

In about another month or so, we expect to have an additional forty four (44) Cuban medical personnel in the public health sector, to include twenty nine (29) nurses, eight (8) doctors, six (6) dentists and one (1) cytology technician. Among the doctors will be three pathologists. We expect that their work will assist us to have quicker turn-around time with respect to the examination of specimen and delivery of results from the National Public Health Lab. I want to thank and acknowledge the Cuban Government for the continued technical support. Mr. Speaker, all these are interim arrangements with Cuba while we look to build our own capacity.

### **Oral Health Services**

Mr. Speaker, we have tremendous plans for oral health services. I have started the process of amending the Dental Act and Regulations as part of the modernization of Dentistry in Jamaica and to protect 'public safety' through setting and enforcing reliable and consistent standards. I have also been working to establish a national Dental Examination Board which would be responsible for ensuring highest competent testing standards.

Mr. Speaker, I have taken the lead in moving to ensure that continuing dental education be a prerequisite for the renewal of the practicing certificate. I am pleased to report that the work is at an advanced stage. We have now received the comments from the Attorney General's chambers; therefore we expect some early movement.

Mr. Speaker, we are partnering with Great Shape! Inc. which is a non-profit organization that facilitates humanitarian projects in Jamaica **to have a National Sealant Programme in collaboration with Great Shape Inc.** The aim is to reduce gum and other diseases and the number of extractions especially in children.

## **Health Financing**

Mr. Speaker, for the short time my Government spent in Opposition – the period in which user fees were abolished – I heard and felt the plight of the people who use our hospitals and health centres. From the lack of diagnostic equipment, to long waiting times at pharmacies, to issues with the availability of drugs and other medical sundries and inadequate ambulances. I vowed that when – not if – this Government took over and if the Hon. Prime Minister saw fit, I would do something about the issues in the health sector. Thankfully the Hon. Prime Minister entrusted me with this awesome responsibility and so being a man of action and less talk, I am taking steps to improve the conditions of the public health sector. I urge you to note however that this is no easy task and it will not happen today or tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker the journey begins with finding sustainable ways to finance the health sector. This is one of the biggest challenges that Governments face, not just in Jamaica or the entire CARICOM Region but also across the world. The ideal is for at about 10% of GDP to be committed to healthcare. Jamaica is at approximately 4.7 percent. While we have not been able to satisfy that requirement we continue to place priority on health when crafting our budget. We know the value of health to the development of the country and the productivity of our people.

Mr. Speaker, Jamaica needs a revolution in health financing. In recognizing this need, the Government, through support from the Inter-American Development Bank, (IDB), engaged an international consultancy firm to conduct a sustainability study of the National Health Service. Having seen the results of the study, the Government believes that it is time for a united and concerted effort towards national dialogue on healthcare financing options.

So far Mr. Speaker, we have completed eight consultations. We have had dialogue with the opposition spokesman on health, health groups and associations, our internal stakeholders and members of the public in the four health regions. We plan to host

another consultation in Spanish Town, St. Catherine in July and engage the academic community on a date to be determined.

I am very optimistic given the robust discussions that we have been having and the numerous and creative suggestions that we have gotten from members of the public. At the end of the consultations, I will have a report that will recommend the best course of action. I will then name a task force to further breakdown the options available to us and the best ways forward. I am truly excited about this process which has solidified my belief that consultation with the public on matters which directly affect them should be a must.

Mr. Speaker, I know everyone is eager to hear what we plan to do about the no user fees policy. The policy will remain in place this year. However, we will be strengthening mechanisms for the collection of the co-payment from insurance companies. We will also be putting in place specialist services that will not be covered under the policy as well as private medical wards in some public hospitals through public/private partnerships. These will be done on a phased basis while we continue the consultations on health financing with the intention of eventually putting in place a mechanism for a National Health Insurance scheme whether locally or Regionally in keeping with universal health coverage. Mr. Speaker, this will be a journey, not a destination given our present fiscal constraints. This Government is committed to providing access to healthcare without compromising the quality of the service and ensuring that whatever the final outcome the interest of the most vulnerable among us will always be given priority consideration.

## **Mobilizing External Resources**

Mr. Speaker, in this environment of fiscal challenges, we find it more and more difficult to finance the health sector on our own. This is why it is imperative that we mobilise external resources and secure linkages with groups such as the Diaspora. Last week I attended the 5<sup>th</sup> biennial Diaspora conference and dialogued with some of the persons who continue to make a meaningful contribution to Jamaica including providing support to the health sector. The Ministry of Health is taking steps to ensure that those who wish to support us can do so without difficulty.

I have put in place a Think Tank and Advisory Body on Diaspora Affairs and Medical Missions as part of measures to facilitate the work of Missions, individuals and groups from the Diaspora and elsewhere. The Advisory Body will work to increase the responsiveness of the Ministry and its agencies to facilitate the work of these groups as well as be the liaison between the Ministry and the Diaspora to ensure a responsive and streamlined process of engagement. Other measures include the appointment of liaison officers at all public hospitals to work with the Advisory Body to seek development assistance for the health sector as well as pursue public/private partnerships.

## **One Authority for Sexual Reproductive Health**

Mr. Speaker, the sustainability of the HIV programme has been at the forefront of our discussion for more than a year. More than 80 percent of the amount spent on the programme each year was from external funding. Now that much of that external funding support is no longer available we have to take decisive steps to improve efficiencies and achieve greater economies of scale to try to secure the gains of the programme. Through funding from the World Bank and support from UNAIDS and PIOJ, we completed a sustainability study to enable us to make evidence based decisions. Mr. Speaker, the results of the study justified our decision to use what we can agree is the best practice approach of integrating the existing sexual and reproductive health programmes.

The major strategy was therefore the implementation of One Authority for Sexual Reproductive Health through the integration of the National Family Planning Board and some aspects of the National HIV Programme. This initiative will address the issue of the absence of one clearly identifiable AIDS Authority. **I am happy to announce that the merger took place in April of this year.**

The integrated organization will give effect to one of the key strategies outlined in Vision 2030 Jamaica National Development Plan which is to “expand and improve integration of family planning, maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS into primary health care”.

### **GOJ Health Card**

**I am pleased to announce that Cabinet has approved the introduction of a Government of Jamaica Health Card for the first time in the history of Jamaica.**

The idea started in the previous administration but we have expanded the concept and the vision. Mr. Speaker, among its uses, the card will facilitate proper systems of monitoring and evaluation and the optimization of service delivery channels for pharmaceuticals.

The phased introduction of this unique card will yield significant benefits through efficiencies in service delivery and overall patient care. The GOJ Health Card will be tied to the individual’s TRN. The Ministry through the NHF will facilitate a simplified and on-going registration process. The card will facilitate better monitoring and identification. It will also take into account private health insurance so that instances where charges arise can be adequately and quickly covered. We see expedited services arising out of the use of this card. We will be taking advantage of improved technology to offer a better client experience and this is why Mr. Speaker by a simple swipe we will be able to identify PATH beneficiaries.

### **Delivery of Pharmacy Services**

Mr. Speaker, we will also be making improvements to the human resources available in the area of pharmacy services. **Beginning August of this year there will be a quantum shift in the makeup of the personnel who deliver pharmacy services. The National Health Fund will be moving into ALL hospitals and public health centres in a bid to take over all facilities and offer a new level of service.**

We now have about 50 pharmacists and 101 pharmacy technicians catering to the many persons who attend the public facilities daily. **The new service will see 155 pharmacists, 101 pharmacy technicians and 64 supply chain staff running the pharmacies in 23 hospitals across Jamaica along with those that operate at public health centres.** Those transferred to the new service will receive better remuneration, improved benefits and working conditions. With a better motivated staff, efficiency gains from the unique GOJ Health Card and improved facilities, Mr. Speaker, we will revolutionize pharmacy services in Jamaica so that there will be a technology-driven, customer-focused, efficiently managed service for the first time in the history of this country.

### **Non Communicable Diseases**

Mr. Speaker, one area that has a huge call on our pharmacy services is Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). NCDs account for upwards of 60% of deaths in Jamaica annually. In the process we spend in excess of US\$170 Million per annum in this area.

The Government is committed to the World Health Assembly resolution of 2012 to reduce premature deaths from non-communicable diseases by 25% by 2025. We will not rest in our effort to meet that target, Mr. Speaker. Remember the slogan **“25 by 2025”**. We are undertaking projects at the local level to improve our services while working with partners such as PAHO/WHO, the IDB, UWI Regional Surveillance Project and CARICOM to create a road map for tackling the NCD epidemic in Jamaica. Out of this we have formulated the first comprehensive strategic plan for NCDs in Jamaica,

which will address the four major conditions causing death and disease in the country: Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Disease, Chronic Respiratory Diseases and the four major risk factors - physical inactivity, unhealthy eating, harmful use of alcohol and tobacco use. It will also address Violence and Injuries Prevention, Mental Health, Oral Health Kidney and Sickle Cell Diseases.

Mr. Speaker the strategies will be undergirded by the all of government all of society approach.

### **Cancer Prevention & Control Programme**

Mr. Speaker, I indicated last year that I would write to the International Atomic Energy Agency to facilitate an *ImPACT* mission by them to undertake an assessment and formulate a cancer control plan for Jamaica. **I am happy to report that we had a very successful visit by the IAEA team in March 2013 and a report should be completed shortly to assist us to determine the way forward. They will also help to reintroduce nuclear medicine technology that will among other things improve our capacity for diagnosis and treatment of cancer.**

**Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to announce that we have secured financing and we are moving full speed ahead to procure two linear accelerator machines (Linac) for radiation treatment. One will be placed in Kingston and the other in Montego Bay.** This will be implemented in collaboration with National Health Fund and CHASE. It is important for me to explain that there is only one such machine in Jamaica and it is in the private sector. **The public sector will have two – for the first time in the history of Jamaica and Mr. Speaker discussions in this regard are going very well.** Lifesaving treatment for Cancer will be moving at warp speed!

## **Tobacco Control**

Mr Speaker, it is critical for us to provide the best possible facilities to offer world class treatment for citizens who unfortunately have developed Cancers and other NCDs. It is imperative that we address the factors that put our citizens at risk of developing these deadly diseases. Among these risk factors, none compares to the scourge of tobacco use. The World Health Organization statistics on tobacco are eye opening Mr. Speaker:

- ✓ Tobacco kills up to half of its users and is the only industry that kills its best and most loyal and faithful customers.
- ✓ Tobacco kills nearly six million people each year including more than 600,000 non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke.
- ✓ Across the globe, every six seconds someone dies from tobacco related illness
- ✓ One in ten adults every year dies an agonising death because of tobacco.
- ✓ Nearly 80% of the world's one billion smokers live in low and middle income countries like Jamaica.

Even more compelling Mr. Speaker is the fact that among the affected persons are those involuntarily exposed to second hand smoke in their workplaces and public places and even our homes. Mr. Speaker **Tobacco is a DRUG.... an extremely addictive drug.** Nicotine is regarded as one of the most dangerous substances globally.

**There are some alarming facts that this honourable House and the Jamaican people need to know about the impact of tobacco use by our children!** The 2010 Global Youth Tobacco Survey undertaken by the National Council on Drug Abuse indicates that just over 40 percent of youth aged 13-15 has smoked at least once and alarmingly just over 19 percent of those who have ever smoked started under the age of 10 years. Mr. Speaker, at this age our children are vulnerable. They cannot make life-altering decisions for themselves. Our children do not recognize the danger of exposure to tobacco. They do not understand they are being duped into becoming the replacement smokers needed to perpetuate an epidemic.

**Mr. Speaker I am prepared to take on the responsibility of correcting the wrongs.**

I am not worried Mr. Speaker because I have a great support system. My team at the Ministry, the many health professionals and persons in Civil Society who have as their mission seeing to the health of this country are my right hand in this matter. I have said it before and I will say it again in this honourable House, I am not just anti-smoker, rather, Mr. Speaker I am pro-health. I take my responsibility to deal with the protection of the health of the people of Jamaica seriously!

Mr. Speaker from 2003 Jamaica was signatory to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), and on July 7, 2005, we ratified the Convention. This is an evidence-based public health treaty that reaffirms the right of all people to the highest standard of health.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come for us to meet our international obligations. More importantly the time has come for us to fulfil our duty to our people, to our most vulnerable, and to our children. The time has come, if we are to meet the goal of 25 by 25, to enact the measures needed to reduce continually and substantially the prevalence of tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke.

**Conclusion**

Mr. Speaker, good health has its foundation in good public health and good public health rests with the family. I would like to highlight the research done by consultant clinical psychologist, Masud Hoghughi, published in the British Medical Journal. He posits that “parenting is probably the most important public health issue facing our society.” He identifies parenting as the single highest common factor across childhood illnesses and accidents, teenage pregnancy and substance misuse, truancy, school disruption, juvenile crime, unemployability and mental health. Parenting and families are critical determinants of health and cannot be ignored.

Therefore Mr. Speaker, along with other stakeholders and players, the Ministry will spearhead the protection of individual and population health through the promotion of healthy families. Indeed, healthy families are the pillars of a healthy nation.

Mr Speaker I am pleased to report that the Team at the Ministry of Health is energized and ready for the ensuing financial year, executing with alacrity the many projects on the table. I demand a lot of my team Mr. Speaker. They must keep pace with me, lock step and think ahead. This honourable House must know that I want to be known as a Minister who keeps his promises.

Mr. Speaker, during my 18 months and with the support of Cabinet, my colleague Members of Parliament and the staff of the Ministry of Health:

- We acquired 56 new vehicles touching many areas of our operations including vector control, mental health, biomedical and emergency services. **Promise made, promise kept!**
- 17 brand new ambulances will begin arriving by July. **Promise made, promise kept!**
- Financing is in place to purchase 2 linear accelerators. Cancer treatment will be moving at warp speed into the modern era. **Promise made, promise kept!**
- For the first time in the history of Jamaica we will be introducing a GOJ Health Card, bringing new technology and greater efficiency to health care delivery. **Promise made, promise kept!**
- For the first time in the history of Jamaica there will be one authority covering the matters of the HIV response and Family Planning. **Promise made, promise kept!**
- There will be four Centres of Excellence in primary healthcare, delivering an expanded menu of health services. **Promise made, promise kept!**
- A new national sealant programme catering to the oral health of children giving them a better chance to show their pearly whites. **Promise made, promise kept!**

- The most transformative and far reaching action to create an efficient and effective pharmacy service. **Promise made, promise kept!**

Mr. Speaker like our Governor General, I am a disciple of the 'I believe in Jamaica' movement. I too believe that there is nothing wrong with Jamaica that that which is right with Jamaica cannot fix. With God's help, we will improve Jamaica's health. I thank you.