

Remarks
Hon. Fayval Williams
Minister of Science, Energy & Technology
Peace Corps Jamaica Group 90 Swearing in Ceremony
May 22, 2019 at 11 a.m.

Salutations:

- Chargé d' Affaires to the U.S. Embassy, Eric Khant
- Country Director, Paul Sully
- Acting Deputy Chief of Mission, Laura Barry-Boyle
- Director of Programming and Training, Michelle Slavin
- Programme and Training Specialists
- Reverend Brian Doyley
- Volunteers
- Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning!

I am honoured to welcome you, the 90th group of Peace Corps volunteers to our island.

It is said that volunteerism is a basic expression of human solidarity and so today, Jamaica and the United States continue on our journey as two nations solidifying our partnership and goals towards social and economic development through service.

Building a Nation through Volunteerism

Since the year of our independence, 1962, the US Peace Corps has had a sustained presence in Jamaica, working within our communities to improve the lives of our people in the areas of environmental awareness, agriculture, literacy and numeracy. Indeed, volunteerism is an essential mechanism for social development, and its reach and impact can be supported, promoted and influenced by public policy.

The spirit of volunteerism in Jamaica has always been strong. In fact, I hasten to say that the development of many of our island's social services and infrastructure were accomplished through the commitment of a variety of religious or youth groups as well as community-based organizations. The men and women of these institutions were not all paid for their service, but were giving of their time and resources, of their own free will.

We thank them, for their service then, and we thank you for your service now.

Volunteerism and the Sustainable Development Agenda

Today, with some 170 countries making a commitment to respond to a global call-to-action called the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, it is through volunteerism and service organizations like the US Peace Corps, where the national targets can again be translated into definitive projects and programmes to **“end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity”**.

To cement the recognition that volunteerism must be integrated as a means of engaging people in sustainable peace and development, on December 17, 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution titled, **Volunteering for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. The resolution encourages the participation and integration of all - youth, older persons, women, migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, minorities and other marginalized groups into volunteer activities. It also encourages Governments, in partnership with the United Nations, the private sector, civil society and others to integrate volunteerism into national development strategies, plans and policies.

Jamaica believes in the power of volunteerism. Through institutions like the National Youth Service, and even within our formal education system, we continue to promote and encourage service as an essential component in the development of our people.

Volunteering is a powerful means to tackle issues related to youth unemployment and it can also help address gender discrimination which is a fundamental cause of inequality that hampers progress against all SDGs.

Volunteerism and Innovation

Volunteerism can also be a vehicle through which innovation is nurtured.

As we build a knowledge-based and digital society, we encourage all Jamaicans to push beyond the limits, **solve with science, innovate with technology** and not be afraid to execute ideas that fall outside the mainstream.

As volunteers, you bring with you fresh eyes and enthusiasm – both key components for innovation. Within each of you is the ability to see outside the normal boundaries, and use your skills, knowledge and the available technologies to create solutions to the challenges you encounter.

I encourage you to look at a problem through eyes that set aside preconceived notions. Embrace new ways of thinking and adopt new tools and techniques toward new discoveries.

Over the next two years, you will be on a journey of exploration. Sharing in the customs of our people, developing new insight and creating opportunities for change. I encourage you to use technology to support and strengthen your programmes. Let it galvanize your communities to take action and use it to inspire the young and old to explore and discover a world of possibilities beyond their wildest imaginations.

Closing

We welcome your hands, your hearts and your time as you give of yourself in the advancement of the social and economic development of our communities.

We welcome your commitment to the task at hand, and your desire to make a positive imprint in the lives of the people you encounter. We welcome your presence which will, for many youngsters, be the inspiration that encourages them to also live a life of service and contribute to our nation's growth.

The journey will not be easy, and for many, it may be downright hard, but on those days or nights when it seem you are inches away from giving up, I want you to remember that you have our support. Call on the resource persons in your corner, keep pushing forward. The impact and reach of your service to the Jamaican people will be evident for years to come.

I leave you with the words of Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve...You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

Today, you take another step on your journey of greatness and already, we
THANK YOU!

