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### **Minister Charles supports D.I.A. Youth Innovation Lab**

State Minister in the Ministry of National Security, Senator the Hon. Parnell Charles Jr. has expressed support for the Democratizing Innovation in the Americas (D.I.A.) Project, which is funded by Citibank and the United States Agency for International Development (U.S.A.I.D.).

The project features the implementation of Youth Innovation Lab by the Institute of Law and Economics (I.L.E.) in collaboration with the Organisation of American States (O.A.S.). Consequently, scores of disaffected youth will now have to access state-of-the-art innovation tools and technology and guidance in a collaborative space.

Speaking earlier this week at the opening ceremony of the project's Urban Challenge Ideathon, Minister Charles congratulated all stakeholders and encouraged participating youth who will brainstorm solutions to challenges facing the city of Kingston.

He said *“I applaud this initiative which supports youth participation in the development process and I urge all participants to maximise this great opportunity to contribute to the development of our nation through your creative ideas and sustainable solutions”*.

The project is expected to create access to spaces for innovation and empower young innovators and micro-entrepreneurs to create solutions that will help to create opportunities at the community level and help advance national development.

Susan Ewerse, Project Director of the OAS' 'New Path' Project explained *“the youth innovation labs will work with at-risk and disaffected youth from all walks of society. It is a ‘high tech’ lab where young people can use from morning until night and be supportive in creating their ideas. Young people can go there, use top of the line equipment to create their ideas, look at it from a 3D point of view. In the summer, all young people who have used the lab will be able to pitch their ideas to get funding to develop those ideas”*.

The two day Ideathon is the first in a series of activities that will result in 20 youth receiving US\$1000 towards the development of their idea. Solutions will focus on five main areas: 1) crime and security, 2) participatory city, 3) youth unemployment, 4) climate change, environmental protection and renewable energy and 5) gender-based violence.