



Remarks Hon Robert Montague MP Minister of National Security

At the

2016 Meeting of the Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council

May 17, 2016

Salutations

On behalf of the Ministry of National Security, its departments and Agencies, I extend a warm welcome to each participant in this year's meeting of the Caribbean Custom's Law Enforcement Council (CCLEC). I especially welcome our guests from the Caribbean and Latin America.

This meeting comes at a critical time in our efforts to improve the security of our citizens in the face of unacceptably high levels of crime especially homicides, not only in Jamaica, but also in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Protecting our borders is an essential element in this effort. Jamaica is not a manufacturer of guns neither is it a producer of cocaine nor some of the other hard drugs that pass through the region. Yet like many others islands in the Caribbean, our law enforcement agencies and customs enforcement agencies are stretched to the limit coping with trans-national criminal organizations who exploit our strategic location

relative to the large countries of North, Central and South America in their effort to move these illicit goods.

Many of us as island states, have long unprotected shorelines that are difficult to monitor and secure, making us extremely vulnerable to these organizations that are highly sophisticated, well resourced and will stop at nothing to achieve their criminal ambitions.

As leaders in our countries and in the region, we must face these threats with even more resoluteness than the criminals who threaten our communities and our citizens. They are fighting for money, but we are fighting for the lives of our people and the very future of our countries.

Each illegal weapon that enters our countries potentially represents one more life at risk, every kilo of cocaine that enters or passes through our countries enrich criminal enterprises and strengthen their capacity to harm our citizens and destroy our communities.

The Government of Jamaica is firmly committed to working with our regional and international partners to fight these threats and to protect our citizens and the country from this growing threat of trans-national crime, especially the trafficking of guns and illicit drugs.

We therefore welcome and fully support this meeting and the effort being made to find effective solutions to address our common mission of securing our borders and protecting our countries.

Your theme: 'Leveraging Customs Information Systems to Optimise our Role in Border Security,' promises to open our eyes to new and better ways of making greater use of the huge investments being made in advanced information systems to secure our borders and to fight crime in the 'Digital Age.'

We wish for you a very meaningful and productive meeting, and look forward to its positive and lasting impact on our national and regional security.

Thank you Ladies and Gentlemen.