



SPEAKING NOTES

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***Plenary Theme: “Developmental Local Government:
providing leadership for social development and economic
growth”***



It is clear that this 2013 Commonwealth Local Government Conference has remained true to its commitment to the principles of the Aberdeen Agenda and the Cardiff Consensus. This year's theme is an indication that we are dedicated to ***'Developmental Local Government' by 'putting local government at the heart of development.'***

It is upon these ideals that our respective countries have gathered under the banner of the CLGF to uphold and discuss the further development and entrenchment of the democratic practices at the local government level. As leaders in the Commonwealth of Nations, our commitment to Local Government should come from our shared conviction that our model of development must allow citizens to be involved in policy making decisions which affect their daily lives.

The holistic role of local government has evolved over time and is evidenced in:

- (1) The shift in perception from that of local government being only a provider of local services to being a facilitator of good governance and a key agent in directing the achievement of balanced and sustainable socio-economic development.***



- (2) The increased enabling environment within which good governance arrangements thrive, including the development of sustainable participatory mechanisms, and***
- (3) The legal and institutional framework which defines roles and responsibilities of local government.***

In Jamaica, we are currently as part of our Reform process, promulgating new legislation which defines the specific responsibilities of local government and the entrenchment of local government in the Constitution. There are other Caribbean islands that are transforming traditional systems to more vibrant ones through reform processes.

Colleagues, there are some specific roles of Local Government as it relates to social development and economic growth that I want to highlight.

As practitioners, we must accept:

Local Government as Community Leader

If Local Government is going to maximize its leadership role in the provision of social development and economic growth, governance arrangements at the local



level must reflect a high degree of participation and developed mechanisms which sustain collaborative efforts among stakeholders.

Mayors and Councilors YOUR LEADERSHIP in the community is essential as it is the closest tier of government to the people.

Organize your community and civil society groups and empower them to take charge of their communities.

The Parish Development Committees (PDCs) in Jamaica which are the representatives of civil society at the parish level are, collaborating with local government in parish development, and will be getting legal recognition in the proposed new Local Governance Act.

We must accept:

Local Government as Leader in reducing poverty and equality

Current models for development have to date, not succeeded in achieving balanced and sustainable development at the community level. As a result, poverty and inequality persist. The new model of Local Economic Development (LED) is a tool to harness local resources for sustainable economic growth. Jamaica has embraced this initiative and has engaged its Local Authorities and stakeholders to identify areas of development.



*In this regard, Jamaica and 13 other CARICOM member States will be supported by the **Caribbean Local Economic Development Programme (CARILED), which is a CAD \$23.2M, (6) six year project, supporting the adoption of LED.***

The Project is a partnership between the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Caribbean Forum of Local Government Ministers (CFLGM), the Caribbean Association of Local Government Authorities (CALGA) and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF).

Colleagues we must accept:

Local Government as Leader in Social Development

The Social Development Commission (SDC) is Jamaica's agency responsible for community mobilization and community development. This agency is tasked with the responsibility of utilizing participatory processes to guide communities to effectively plan and develop strategies to achieve their developmental goals.

The focus is on economic prosperity, social well-being, environmental preservation and good governance. This approach seeks to develop and strengthen partnerships at the community level.



The role of Councillors and Members of Parliament in community representation

Success in facilitating development at the local level is significantly influenced by the level of representation by elected officials. The situation is further complicated by the potential for the blurring of roles of representatives from Central and Local Government. These roles when not clearly defined, unnecessarily complicates the development process at the local level.

In Jamaica, we are seeking to clarify the respective roles at the community level. As a first step, in a recently concluded Organizational Review of Local Authorities, guidelines for the role of Councillors were created. These are reinforced through orientation sessions, but we are fully aware that the sustainable solution lies in good functional relationships between central and local government.

Challenges for Local Government to provide leadership for social development and economic growth

As a region, there are several challenges that impede the efforts of Local government



1. There is Low level of devolution in local government.
2. Inability of local government to be self-financing
3. Current term of elected officials do not provide time to create and implement plan
4. The need for capacity building
5. Low level of Remuneration
6. High dependency on Central Government

How do we address these challenges?

- ❖ Advocacy for national decentralisation policies.
- ❖ Legislative reforms
- ❖ Twinning of cities within and outside the Commonwealth to share **best practices.**
- ❖ **Partner with Regional and international funding agencies and Governments to promote LED**
- ❖ **Engage and build consensus with citizens at the community level.**



I therefore encourage all our partner nations to join us in the continued effort to develop Local Government for our communities our towns and our people. I assure you that Jamaica stands willing to share as well as benefit from our exchange.