Building a Resilient Path to Recovery with and for Jamaica's Youth:

A Call to Action

The 'I Believe' Initiative National
Youth Consultative Conference (YCC)

On October 6 and 7, 2021, we, Jamaica's youth from across the island came together virtually for the *'I Believe' Initiative's* Annual Youth Consultative Conference. The theme for this year's conference was "A Decade of Action: Building a Resilient Path to Recovery with and for Jamaica's Youth". A partnership with the United Nations in Jamaica allowed for mainstreaming of Jamaica's Vision 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals..

A series of consultative sessions and workshops were staples of the YCC agenda, providing avenues for young people to table their own ideas for our recovery and sustained mainstreaming of the SDGs. A key output of the 2021 YCC is this call to action that presents the collective demands of our young people as we create a roadmap for our recovery. This is a **call to action** for our Government,private sector, international development partners and civil society.

1. Mainstream Technology as an Important Element of the Public Education System beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The use of technology in the classroom should be more than a tool to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Successful recovery should not halt efforts to scale up the use of technology in the classroom.

We call for Government and its partners to work together to provide equitable and sustainable access to quality internet across Jamaica and facilitate access to technology-enabled resources for those most at risk of being left behind - including students with disabilities, the poor and rural-area youth.

We call for tertiary institutions to reform curricula to build the capacity of educators to support students to use technology in the public education system. By mainstreaming technology and innovative approaches in our education system and our country, we will prevent further delays in our advancement of the Vision 2030 agenda and in attaining **Goal 4 (Quality Education) of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

2. Promote Responsible and Ethical Digital Citizenship.

As technology becomes further mainstreamed into education and other facets of youth development, we demand more support from Government, private sector, development partners, and civil society to prepare us, our parents and educators to be responsible digital citizens. We want to become more equipped with skills to help them navigate inaccurate information and use the internet and other technology safely; particularly as it relates to the pandemic, research, mental and sexual health and other elements of personal and civic development. It is important that ethical digital citizenship become a key feature

It is important that ethical digital citizenship become a key feature of our public education and other learning spaces.

3. Empower Young People to become Champions of Public Health Education within their Homes and Communities.

COVID-19 vaccines are currently only available for children 12 years and older, many of whom contend that their own awareness encouraged their parents to have them vaccinated. There is an opportunity for us to become conveyors of accurate health information, especially those from communities where literacy levels are low and parents lack formal education. This approach goes beyond the COVID-19 pandemic to include other health concerns such non-communicable

diseases. Our parents have strong faith in education as a tool for upward social mobility and will trust us, their children, on matters they learn at school.

We demand that national public health education campaigns engage young people, especially students, to strategically share campaign resources with our families, including simple guides for debunking inaccurate information. Empowering us as champions of health information can bring Jamaica closer to attaining SDG **goal number 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing).**

4. Facilitate and Encourage Diverse Pathways to Employment.

Conventional sources of employment were affected by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This pushed several entities to introduce avenues for virtual engagement with customers, providers and other constituents. Young people are of the view that the pandemic reinforces the need for a more diverse and inclusive workforce. This extends to the professions linked to ICT, web-design and coding, digital marketing, entrepreneurship and other emerging fields.

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We call for tertiary institutions to adjust their offerings to include programmes that are tailored to the growing demands of a modern workforce. Following suit, the government should accelerate and promote the modernization of the public and private sector to better accommodate school-leaving youth and these emerging skill sets. This advances SDG 8 and the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work.

5. Facilitate Platforms for Youth Dialogue on Issues Impacting the SDGs

As we advance to a closer sense of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, young people are optimistic. We believe that a robust roadmap, grounded in Vision 2030 and the SDGs, is needed. Jamaica's recovery efforts should not be in isolation of new and emerging challenges that impact on our actualization of the sustainable development goals.

Now more than ever, we call for and require consistent and meaningful engagement in recovery planning, as they are likely to most impact our development for the next 10 years and beyond.

We are more than just a point of validation; and as people impacted by a myriad of issues, we too must have a voice in solving those issues. This advances **SDG number 17**, which speaks to strengthening partnerships, including youth and youth-led bodies to achieve the SDGs.

We, therefore, call on the Government and all responsible stakeholders to act within the best interest of Jamaica's youth and for our optimal contribution to National Development.