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MEDIA RELEASE

Long Overdue Actions Needed from Prime Minister Holness to Deter Corruption and Hold Public Officials to Account

The Jamaica Accountability Meter Portal, JAMP, is calling on Prime Minister, the Most Honourable Andrew Holness, to keep his promises to the nation to strengthen the mechanisms to deter corruption and hold public officials to account. JAMP acknowledges the positive development of the recent signing of the bipartisan consensus on crime. We, however, encourage the Government to not lose sight of other outstanding actions to further deter corruption.

Among the outstanding actions for the Prime Minister, which he promised during the 2015 campaign, **is a re-tabling of an Impeachment Bill.**

"In the wake of the several reports and investigations into alleged wrong-doing by public officials and agencies, we are calling on Prime Minister Holness to make good on his commitments and to demonstrate that he recognizes the urgency for deterring corruption by strengthening the mechanisms for holding public officials to account. An Impeachment Act, is a game-changer for accountability" JAMP Executive Director, Jeanette Calder notes.

The Impeachment Bill, which was first tabled in 2011 by then Prime Minister, Bruce Golding, would provide legislation for citizens, and watch dog agencies such as the Integrity Commission, Director of Public Prosecutions, Public Defender, Political Ombudsman, Director of Elections etc., to request impeachment proceedings against a Senator or Member of Parliament for corruption or misappropriation of public funds or property; refusal to exercise, or persistent neglect in the exercise of, the duties or responsibilities of their office or abuse of their official authority.

"The several cases of questionable actions by public officials and the escalating adverse reports from the Auditor General on public agencies show us, that we the citizens need to become more demanding and insistent on not just promises but action, nothing less." says Ms. Calder.

Urgent too, are amendments to those provisions of the **Integrity Act** which have effectively disabled citizens' right to know which parliamentarians have committed an offence regarding declaration of their assets and whether their corruption complaints are being addressed by the Integrity Commission. These provisions limiting the Commissions ability to inform the public of investigations is an impediment to transparency and public trust in the important work of the Commission.

JAMP has noted the improved level of bi-partisan representation of the public's interest by members of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC). The Committees' annual reports contain valuable recommendations for remedying mismanagement and inefficiencies. However, despite the egregious losses to the public purse, **JAMP's research for the period 2010 to 2019, found that, though tabled, no PAC or PAAC annual reports were placed on the Agenda for Parliamentary discussion and action. In the case of the PAC, for the period 2015/16 to present no reports have been tabled, therefore disabling access for both the media and the public.** JAMP is calling on Prime Minister Holness to ensure that the Leader of Government Business places these annual reports on the House Agenda, as a matter of priority.

In Dec 2016, PM Holness made a positive move by signing a letter of intent with the international body, **Open Government Partnership**, and pledged "*commitment to the principles and objectives outlined in the Open Government Declaration*".

The first requirement as a signatory, which the PM committed to in that letter was to consult with citizens to develop and "*give priority to elaborating a National Action Plan with the input of relevant stakeholders*". This Declaration speaks to facilitating more entry points for public participation, reinforcing anti-corruption measures, greater transparency in the management of public finances and procurement etc.

This commitment is outstanding and the country is on record to have failed to meet the deadline for three (3) years.

JAMP calls on Prime Minister Holness, to follow through with his commitment to the people of Jamaica and the Open Government Partnership, with special attention to the signed Declaration.

JAMP encourages the public to continue its sustained demand for action and accountability.

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