



Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, says the Cabinet is united in its commitment to do whatever is necessary and prudent to arrive at an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that is in the best interest of Jamaica.

She was addressing a special post Cabinet media briefing at Jamaica House, on January 14, following a three-day retreat by the Cabinet, which ended on Saturday, January 12.

Mrs. Simpson Miller reported that during the retreat, the Cabinet focused on several major areas of critical importance to the country. These included the IMF negotiations; advancing the growth and development agenda; public-private partnerships and job creation; and social protection.

She pointed out that at the heart of the Cabinet's discussions was the concern to ensure a proper relationship between laying the foundation for sustainable growth on the one hand, and making fiscal adjustments on the other.

"We were of one accord in facing the sobering reality that, as was accomplished in the last budget, we would have to curtail expenditure and increase revenues, while still providing the critical services required by all our people," the Prime Minister said.

She stated that in addition to the difficult consolidation efforts, the Cabinet is also "making sure that we achieve the specific economic targets and aggressively pursue major development projects."

"We are seeing to the protection of the vulnerable. We are also making a renewed effort not only to make the public service more efficient and effective, but also to make it far more customer- friendly," the Prime Minister said.

She added that it is in the interest of everyone to stand together as a nation and give support to every genuine attempt to put Jamaica firmly on a path of sustainable growth and development.

The Prime Minister also told the press briefing that in the coming weeks the country will be provided with regular updates on the progress of the programme to reposition the economy and the society as a whole.

After outlining several reasons for the protracted negotiations with the IMF, the Prime Minister said that while an agreement with the IMF is necessary at this time, to support the country's macro-economic programme, it is not an "end in-and-of itself".

"Every Jamaican recognises that there is a need for us to develop a complementary programme geared at encouraging investment; stimulating the economy and, in general, creating a more equitable society for the majority of the population," she said.

Mrs. Simpson Miller cited a number of projects and programmes that are in train to breathe new life into the economy and create jobs, and that in three areas alone, investment commitments are at the level of US\$650 million.

The Prime Minister said the Cabinet came away from the retreat with an even stronger resolve to pursue the imperative of economic growth. "Getting there requires that we enable and protect the most vulnerable, so that they are fully included in the growth process," she added.