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Community Tourism Consultations get Underway in St. Elizabeth

Kingston, Jamaica: April 16, 2014 – The Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment hosted the first in a series of national consultations on the Community-Based Tourism Policy green paper on April 15, 2014 at Lovers’ Leap in St. Elizabeth. These consultations, which will be held in parishes across the island, aim to elicit valuable feedback from community stakeholders and tourism partners. The Community-Based Tourism Policy green paper, a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment and the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF), was tabled in Parliament in February of this year. These consultations represent the final step towards making the policy a white paper.

The Community Tourism Policy and Strategy is intended to add depth and diversity to the tourism product, by encouraging a more widespread community participation in the sector. It will lay the foundation for an equitable and sustainable community tourism

sector in Jamaica that benefits communities through economic development, job creation, and infrastructural development.

Giving the main address at the consultation, State Minister for Tourism and Entertainment, the Hon. Damion Crawford, stated that in keeping with its mandate of “Tourism for All”, the ministry has been working to diversify the tourism products to ensure that every Jamaican has the opportunity to benefit from tourism.

Continuing his message of diversification, the state minister said that product diversification was as important as market diversification, as not all tourists come to Jamaica to see the same thing. “If you don’t diversify your product you cannot diversify your market. You can’t sell Jamaica’s best beaches to a Brazilian because the Brazilians believe they have the best beaches,” Minister Crawford said.

Mr. Crawford emphasized that, tourism cannot be perceived as only for the few and only for the wealthy, as not everyone is capable of making an initial high level investment. Minister Crawford also pointed out that St. Elizabeth is best positioned to be an example for community tourism that Jamaica and other countries will follow.

Also speaking at the event, JSIF’s General Manager of Infrastructure & Civil Works, Andrew Neita, noted that the organization is eager to facilitate the linking of communities in the dialogue for creation of a national policy, with the intended end result of guiding tourism development; at the level of underserved communities and

groups. According to Mr. Neita, “the JSIF’s contribution of JA \$6,230,000.00, through its Rural Economic Development Project (REDI), will support the development of entrepreneurship within communities, thereby stimulating sustainable livelihoods, income generation and employment within the underserved population.

The community consultation was also attended by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, Jennifer Griffith; Member of Parliament South East St. Elizabeth, Richard Parchment; Executive Director of the Tourism Product Development Company (TPDCo), Dennis Hickey; Chairman of the St Elizabeth Parish Development Committee, Jason Henzell, and the ministry’s Senior Director of Tourism Policy and Monitoring, Elecia Myers.