

**PRESENTATION OF JACQUELINE COKE-LLOYD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
JAMAICA EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION ON "THE ROLE OF ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT
IN PROMOTING DECENT WORK" AT THE PREPARATORY MEETING OF THE HIGH
LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
APRIL 4-5, 2006**

MR. CHAIRMAN, MODERATOR, DISTINGUISHED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION (ILO), DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (DESA), THE WORLD BANK AND THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO), PARTICIPANTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. I AM DELIGHTED AND HONOURED TO HAVE BEEN AFFORDED THE PRIVILEGE OF ADDRESSING THIS DISTINGUISHED GATHERING. I AM COGNISANT OF AND GREATLY RESPECT THE WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL. YOUR GENERAL THEME "CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS CONDUCTIVE TO GENERATING FULL AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL" HIGHLIGHTS THE COLLABORATIVE NATURE AND INTERNATIONAL FLAVOUR OF ANY EFFORT THAT IS TO SUCCEED AT CREATING DECENT WORK FOR ALL. INDEED IT IS AN EFFORT THAT MUST REFLECT NOT ONLY THE LEADERSHIP OF EMPLOYERS BUT ALSO THE PRODUCTIVE EFFORTS OF EMPLOYEES. THIS LEADS ME TO THE PRESENTATION THAT I MUST NOW DELIVER.

I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO SPEAK ON THE TOPIC "THE ROLE OF ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN PROMOTING DECENT WORK". TO BETTER CONSIDER WHAT THE ROLE OF ENTERPRISE MIGHT BE IN THIS CONTEXT, I INVITE YOU TO FOCUS A LITTLE ON WHAT THE ILO CONSIDERS TO BE DECENT WORK. ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, JUAN SOMAVIA

"THE PRIMARY GOAL OF THE ILO TODAY IS TO PROMOTE OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN TO OBTAIN DECENT AND PRODUCTIVE WORK, IN CONDITIONS OF FREEDOM, EQUITY, SECURITY AND HUMAN DIGNITY."

AN EXTENDED EXPLANATION OF DECENT WORK DRAWN FROM AN ILO WEBSITE STATES THAT "DECENT WORK SUMS UP THE ASPIRATIONS OF PEOPLE IN THEIR WORKING LIVES. IT INVOLVES OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK THAT IS PRODUCTIVE AND DELIVERS A FAIR INCOME, SECURITY IN THE WORKPLACE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR FAMILIES, BETTER PROSPECTS FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION, FREEDOM FOR PEOPLE TO EXPRESS THEIR CONCERNS, ORGANIZE AND PARTICIPATE IN THE DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR LIVES AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY AND TREATMENT FOR ALL WOMEN AND MEN". FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE, DECENT WORK MAY NOT BE ATTAINED OUTSIDE OF THE CONTEXT OF FREEDOM, EQUITY, SECURITY AND HUMAN DIGNITY.

THIS SUGGESTS THAT DECENT WORK EXTENDS BEYOND THE BOUNDS OF THE WORKPLACE INTO THE ARENA OF POLITICS AND SOCIETAL NORMS. WHY POLITICS? BECAUSE ISSUES SUCH AS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ARE GOVERNANCE MATTERS OFTEN TIED IN TO THE POLITICAL ARENA. EQUITY IS BOTH A SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL MATTER. THE IMPLICATION HERE IS THAT DECENT WORK THAT CONSIDERS THESE FACTORS IS AS MUCH AN OBJECTIVE TO BE ATTAINED BY GOOD BUSINESS PRACTICE, AS IT IS A MATTER FOR SOCIETY AND STATE TO FACILITATE. FOR THIS REASON ALTHOUGH DECENT WORK IS OFTEN ASSOCIATED MORE WITH THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES THAN DEVELOPING, WORKERS ARE ALSO FOUND TO BE WORKING IN CONDITIONS THAT MAY NOT BE CONSIDERED DECENT IN ECONOMICALLY PROSPEROUS OR GROWING COUNTRIES DUE TO THE POLITICAL BENT OF THE LEADERS. IN THIS REGARD, SOME COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD THAT ARE GROWING IN ECONOMIC PROSPERITY DO NOT ALLOW FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. EQUALLY, SOME OTHERS THAT ARE CONSIDERED ECONOMICALLY ADVANCED DO NOT ALLOW EQUALITY IN AREAS SUCH AS GENDER.

PERHAPS THE EXPERIENCE OF THE JAMAICA EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION (JEF) IN INTRODUCING THE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK (YEN) TO JAMAICA PROVIDES AN APPROACH THAT MAY BE CONSIDERED. IN ESTABLISHING THIS NETWORK IN JAMAICA, JEF COMMUNICATED WITH ALL THE STAKEHOLDERS INCLUDING GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOT THEM INVOLVED ON THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE YEN. THE COURSE OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE NETWORK AND THE APPROACH TO DELIVERING ITS OBJECTIVES WERE ALL SHAPED BY THIS COLLABORATIVE PROCESS. THE END RESULT IS THAT THE JAMAICA YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK (JYEN) HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED WITH THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA AND ITS RELEVANT AGENCIES, THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY. THE JYEN

HAS NOW TAKEN ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN WITH THE JEF SUPPORTING AS THE SECRETARIAT AND AS A MEMBER OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE. I HASTEN TO ADD THAT I USE THIS AS AN EXAMPLE OF GOOD COLLABORATION NOT OF A POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT THAT IS NOT CONDUCIVE TO DECENT WORK BECAUSE OUR GOVERNMENT IN JAMAICA HAS DONE MUCH TO FACILITATE A GOOD WORK ENVIRONMENT. HAVING SAID THAT, THIS MULTI STAKEHOLDER APPROACH COULD BE TAKEN IN THE PURSUIT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENTERPRISE THAT SEEKS TO FOSTER THE IDEALS OF DECENT WORK. TO ACHIEVE THIS, ENTERPRISES NEED TO COLLABORATE WITH EACH OTHER IN SUCH A WAY AS TO GARNER A POLITICAL AND SOCIETAL RESPONSE TO THE NEED FOR AN APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENT FOR DECENT WORK.

ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AS AN END IN ITSELF IS AN AVENUE THROUGH WHICH DECENT WORK MAY BE CREATED. IN MANY OF THE POORER COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD, THE ABSENCE OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORK LEAD PEOPLE INTO MARGINAL EMPLOYMENT. PEDDLERS BY THE ROADSIDE SELLING CIGARETTES OR OTHER SMALL ITEMS, UNABLE TO EARN ENOUGH TO EKE OUT A REASONABLE LIVING FOR THEMSELVES OR SCROUNGING IN UNHEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS TO PRODUCE SUBSTANDARD GOODS ARE BUT A FEW EXAMPLES OF THIS. CLEARLY, THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEANINGFUL ENTERPRISES WILL REDUCE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THIS MAY HAPPEN.

THE NEED FOR ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IS MOST APPARENT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WITH PERSISTENTLY HIGH LEVELS OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT. HOWEVER, THERE ARE OFTEN HINDRANCES TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW ENTERPRISES IN THESE COUNTRIES. ONE OF THE HINDRANCES IS THE ABSENCE OF FINANCING. IN MY COUNTRY, WHILE MANY NEW FINANCING OPPORTUNITIES ARE BEING CREATED, SADLY, MANY SMALL MANUFACTURERS OF ITEMS SUCH AS FURNITURE ARE UNABLE TO ACCESS FUNDING TO GROW THEIR BUSINESS. THE REASON IS THAT FINANCING FOR MICRO-ENTERPRISE IS FOCUSED ON ENTERPRISES THAT OFFER QUICK CASH RETURNS RATHER THAN THOSE THAT AWAIT LONGER TERM RETURNS. THE RESULT IS THAT MANY ARTISANS WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GROW INTO BIGGER BUSINESSES ARE OPERATING MARGINALLY. THIS IS ALSO TRUE WITH RESPECT TO AGRICULTURE. AS A PRIORITY, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WILL NEED TO EXAMINE ITS ROLE IN INFLUENCING THE CREATION OF FINANCING AVENUES FOR ENTERPRISES SUCH AS THESE. OTHERWISE, MARGINAL EMPLOYMENT WILL CONTINUE TO CHARACTERISE SMALL AND MICRO MANUFACTURERS AS WELL AS AGRICULTURE.

ANOTHER HINDRANCE TO THE GROWTH OF ENTERPRISE IS WHAT I WILL TERM THE ABSENCE OF A BUSINESS CULTURE. BY A BUSINESS CULTURE, I MEAN A BENT TO SEEING AND ACTING ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS. IN MANY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS GO A BEGGING BECAUSE THERE ARE NO TAKERS. THERE IS A NEED TO INCORPORATE IN THE TRAINING AND EDUCATION OF THE GENERAL POPULACE, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNG IN THESE COUNTRIES, AN UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO IDENTIFY AND ACT ON BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES. THIS IS A MOST CRUCIAL STEP IN THE PROCESS OF ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT. THIS NEEDS TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY PRACTICAL TRAINING IN HOW TO OPERATE SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES. THOSE COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD THAT HAVE BECOME DRIVERS IN THE WORLD OF BUSINESS HAVE GROWN ON THE ENTERPRISING NATURE OF THEIR POPULATION. THERE IS THEREFORE A CRITICAL NEED FOR THIS TYPE OF ORIENTATION.

SOME OF THE OTHER HINDRANCES TO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ARE WELL DOCUMENTED AND OFTEN VENTILATED. THESE INCLUDE INFLEXIBLE LABOUR MARKET POLICIES, ONEROUS REGISTRATION PROCESSES, COSTLY DEMANDS ON ENTERPRISE THAT MAKE BUSINESS OPERATIONS EXPENSIVE AND HIGH GOVERNMENT TAXES. THESE HAVE LED TO THE GROWTH OF THE INFORMAL SECTOR.

THESE HINDRANCES ARE NOT EASILY REMOVED. WITH RESPECT TO THE REGISTRATION PROCESSES, IN SOME COUNTRIES, THE ABSENCE OF APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY ALIGNED WITH THE NEED TO MONITOR THE OPERATIONS OF ENTERPRISE LEAD TO THE CREATION OF CUMBERSOME AND UNWIELDY PROCEDURES. THE SOLUTION IS TO ASSIST GOVERNMENT TO DEVISE MECHANISMS THAT WILL ALLOW THEM TO MONITOR BUSINESS ACTIVITIES WITHOUT RESORTING TO COMPLEX REGISTRATION PROCEDURES.

ON THE MATTER OF THE COSTS INVOLVED IN BUSINESS OPERATIONS, THE CAUSES ARE VARIED. IN MANY OF THE LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES, THE ABSENCE OF APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY MAKES THE OPERATION OF BUSINESS MORE EXPENSIVE. SOMETIMES IT IS A MATTER OF BEING UNABLE TO AFFORD THE TECHNOLOGY. AT OTHER TIMES IT IS A MATTER OF

NEEDING TO BE EXPOSED TO AND TRAINED IN THE USE OF THE DESIRED TECHNOLOGY. WITH RESPECT TO THE ISSUE OF AFFORDABILITY, SMALL AND MICRO BUSINESSES NEED TO CONSIDER COLLABORATION IN THE PURCHASE AND USE OF EXPENSIVE EQUIPMENT. THEY NEED ALSO TO CONSIDER A JOINT APPROACH TO MARKETING IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO ACCESS BULK MARKETS AND THEREBY INCREASE THEIR SALES AND PROFITABILITY.

AS REGARDS EXPOSURE AND TRAINING, A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH WOULD ALSO ALLOW THESE ENTERPRISES TO GAIN ACCESS TO TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AND TECHNOLOGY FAIRS WHERE THEY MAY VIEW NEW AND ADVANCED EQUIPMENT. THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES COULD CONSIDER MORE INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING STRATEGY THAT WILL RENDER TECHNOLOGY MORE ACCESSIBLE TO SMALL ENTITIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.

OF COURSE, GOVERNMENT MAY ADVANCE THE PROCESS BY CREATING INCENTIVES SUCH AS DUTY WAIVERS AND TAX BREAKS TO ENCOURAGE THE USE OF APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY IN SMALL BUSINESSES AND TO ASSIST IN INCUBATING NEW BUSINESSES. FINANCING INSTITUTIONS MAY ASSIST BY LOOKING AT CREATIVE FINANCING MECHANISMS THAT CONSIDER THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF SMALL MANUFACTURING AND AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES IN PARTICULAR.

HAVING LOOKED AT SOME OF THE ISSUES SURROUNDING ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT, I WOULD LIKE TO REVISIT THE NOTION OF DECENT WORK. THERE ARE REALITIES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES THAT MAY NOT EXIST IN DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND WHICH MAY IMPINGE ON THE WAY THAT ENTERPRISES DEVELOP AND OPERATE AND ON HOW THEY DEFINE AND REGARD DECENT WORK. THESE ARE OFTEN REFLECTED IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL NORMS. THE QUESTION IS TO WHAT EXTENT SHOULD THE DEFINITION OF DECENT WORK CONSIDER DIFFERENCES IN SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUES? SHOULD CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE BY THE SOCIETY IN LOOKING AT THE WAY IN WHICH ENTERPRISES DEVELOP AND PRACTICE? IS THERE SUCH A THING AS A UNIVERSAL STANDARD? IF SO, WHOSE STANDARD SHOULD BE THE UNIVERSAL MARK? I AM NOT HERE ATTEMPTING TO SAY WHETHER OR NOT THERE SHOULD BE A STANDARD NOR AM I ATTEMPTING TO SAY WHAT THIS STANDARD SHOULD BE BUT I BELIEVE IT IS AN ISSUE THAT SHOULD BE RAISED FOR CONSIDERATION.

IN THIS REGARD, I DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO THE EMPLOYERS' WORKING DEFINITION OF DECENT WORK AS EXPOUNDED BY THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF EMPLOYERS (IOE).

THEY STATE THAT DECENT WORK:

- ❑ REQUIRES, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, THE CREATION OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.
- ❑ DOES NOT MEAN UNIVERSAL STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO ALL WORKERS AND JOBS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. IT IS A RELATIVE CONCEPT, A MOVING TARGET AND A GOAL TO BE ACHIEVED WITHIN THE CAPACITY AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS OF EACH COUNTRY. IT DOES NOT MEAN EVERY WORKER PERFORMING COMPARABLE WORK MUST RECEIVE THE SAME QUANTUM OF WAGES AND ENJOY THE SAME CONDITIONS OF WORK EVERYWHERE.
- ❑ DOES NOT MEAN THE APPLICATION OF ALL INTERNATIONAL LABOUR STANDARDS IN ALL COUNTRIES.
- ❑ IS CONDITIONAL ON A COUNTRY HAVING AN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY, WHICH ARE PREREQUISITES TO ALLEVIATING UNSATISFACTORY SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS.

THIS DEFINITION RECOGNISES THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENCES IN CULTURE AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT.

AS WE CONTEMPLATE THESE ISSUES, THE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENTERPRISES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES COMES INTO FOCUS. GLOBALISATION IS A REALITY THAT ALL COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD MUST FACE. IT HAS BROUGHT INTO FOCUS INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS. IT HAS BROUGHT WITH IT COMPETITION THAT HAS IN SOME INSTANCES, FUELLED THE ADVANCEMENT OF ENTERPRISE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. IT HAS CREATED OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT THAT HAVE PULLED SOME DEVELOPING ECONOMIES INTO THE FIRST WORLD AND ARE CONTINUING TO PULL OTHERS. HOWEVER, IN OTHER INSTANCES, IT HAS WORKED TO THE DETRIMENT OF SOME

ENTERPRISES. THE CHANGES IN THE TRADING REGIMES UNDER LOME FOR EXAMPLE HAVE CREATED UNEMPLOYMENT IN AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES AND FOR SMALL FARMERS. THE CENTURIES OLD PROBLEM OF UNEQUAL TRADE (ENTERPRISES SELLING LOW VALUE PRODUCTS IN RETURN FOR HIGH VALUE GOODS AND SERVICES) AND THE IMPOSITION OF STANDARDS ON UNDER PREPARED ENTERPRISES ARE TWO OTHER CONSEQUENCES OF GLOBALISATION. THE RESULT IS THAT MANY SMALL BUSINESSES HAVE GONE UNDER IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND LEFT SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION IMPOVERISHED OR WORKING IN CONDITIONS THAT ARE SUBSTANDARD.

THE FAILURE OF SMALL ENTERPRISES AND THE LACK OF OTHER ACCEPTABLE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES HAVE RESULTED IN INCREASED OUTWARD MIGRATION FROM MANY OF THESE COUNTRIES. THIS OUTFLOW HAS INVOLVED EQUALLY THE HIGHLY SKILLED AND LOW SKILLED WORKERS FROM THE COUNTRIES INVOLVED. WORLD BANK ESTIMATES INDICATE THAT THE MAJORITY OF TERTIARY LEVEL GRADUATES IN COUNTRIES SUCH AS JAMAICA, EMIGRATE DUE TO LACK OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. THIS SO CALLED BRAIN DRAIN IS BELIEVED TO HAVE AFFECTED THE RATE OF DEVELOPMENT OF SOME COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I CHALLENGE THAT ONE OF THE BEST WAYS TO PROMOTE DECENT WORK THE POOR, IS TO INVEST IN PEOPLE INDIGENOUS SKILLS AND COMPETENCES BY FACILITATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND SMALL ENTERPRISES. THIS HOWEVER WILL REQUIRE THE COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF OUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES AS WELL AS OTHER INTERNATIONAL DONORS IN ENSURING THE LONG-TERM VIABILITY OF THESE ENTERPRISES. THESE ENTERPRISES MAY RANGE FROM, AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, SERVICE TYPE INDUSTRIES, LIGHT MANUFACTURING OR HOME BASED ENTERPRISES. THE SIZE OF THESE ENTERPRISES MAY ALSO INVOLVE AN ENTIRE COMMUNITY, A SMALL GROUP OF WORKERS OR A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL, ALL HAVING THE POTENTIAL TO EMPLOY OTHER WORKERS.

THESE ENTERPRISES HAVE WORKED SUCCESSFULLY IN SEVERAL DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AS A SOURCE OF JOBS FOR THE POOR AND EVEN IN OUR RICHEST NATIONS. IT IS THEREFORE NO SURPRISE THAT THE ILO'S GLOBAL AGENDA FOR EMPLOYMENT PLACES SMALL ENTERPRISE IN ITS PROPER PLACE – "AT THE HEART OF JOB CREATION." DATA FROM THE UNITED STATES ECONOMY SUGGEST THAT OVER 60% OF THE COUNTRY'S GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP) AND EMPLOYMENT IS GENERATED FROM SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES. WE CAN THEREFORE WITH CONFIDENCE, SUPPORT THESE SELF HELP PROGRAMMES AS A VEHICLE THROUGH WHICH WE CAN PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE DECENT WORK, PRIMARILY BECAUSE, ASSISTANCE AND RELIEF PROGRAMES ARE TEMPORARY RESPONSES AND CANNOT CREATE SUSTAINABLE JOBS.

AS MENTIONED EARLIER THE JAMAICA EMPLOYERS FEDERATION IS AT PRESENT THE SECRETARIAT FOR THE JAMAICA YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK (JYEN). ONE OF THE NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTED BY THE JYEN, IS THE AGENCY FOR INNER-CITY RENEWAL (AIR). THE MODE OF OPERATION OF THIS ENTITY IS TO ACTUALLY GO INTO THE TARGETED INNER-CITY AREA TO DIRECTLY INCORPORATE UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS. THIS ORGANIZATION THEREFORE ADOPTS A PROACTIVE APPROACH TOWARDS STIMULATING EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE INNER-CITY AREA OF TRENCH TOWN, JAMAICA (HOME OF BOB MARLEY). AIR UTILIZES THE BUSINESS INCUBATOR APPROACH WHEREBY BUSINESS IDEAS OF RESIDENTS ARE GIVEN SUPPORT IN THE AREAS OF BUSINESS PLAN DEVELOPMENT, FINANCING, PROCUREMENT, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT TRAINING AND MARKETING. ONE EXAMPLE OF THE SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAMME IS A COMPUTER NETWORK ENTERPRISE. THIS STARTED AS AN IDEA OF A YOUNG MAN IN THE INNER CITY, AND THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF AIR THAT MICRO ENTERPRISE HAS A PERMANENT BUSINESS LOCATION, AND CLEARLY IDENTIFIED MARKET. THE PROPRIETOR HAS ALSO BEEN FACILITATED TO START A DEGREE PROGRAMME IN MANAGEMENT. IN ADDITION TO ALL OF THIS, THE BUSINESS HAS BEEN ABLE TO GENERATE EMPLOYMENT FOR FIVE (5) INDIVIDUALS. THIS IS A PRIME EXAMPLE OF IDENTIFYING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES OUTSIDE OF THE TRADITIONAL AREAS OF EMPLOYMENT.

A SECOND INITIATIVE OF JEF IN ASSISTING TO CREATE NON- TRADITIONAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IS OUR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS ASSOCIATION (YEA). THE KEY OBJECTIVES

OF THIS ORGANIZATION IS TO FACILITATE NETWORKING, BUSINESS VENTURE AND MARKET EXPANSION OPPORTUNITIES AS WELL AS THE LOBBYING OF REGULATORY AGENCIES TO FACILITATE AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH YOUNG ENTERPRISES CAN GROW AND PROSPER.

IN JEF'S CONTINUED EFFORT TO IDENTIFY NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITIES AND TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF OUTPUT BY OUR WORKFORCE, WE HAVE ENTERED INTO TWO PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS, A CONCEPT THAT WE WISH TO PROMOTE AT THIS MEETING. THE FIRST IS A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN THE NATIONAL TRAINING AGENCY OF JAMAICA AND JEF. THE FOREMOST OBJECTIVE OF THIS MOU IS TO FACILITATE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO PARTNERS IN ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF THE JAMAICAN WORKFORCE. WE MUST INFORM YOU, THAT ONE OF THE PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES OF THIS PROGRAMME ARE THE EMPLOYED AND MARGINALIZED IN OUR SOCIETY. THESE INDIVIDUALS BENEFIT BY ACQUIRING SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES VIA TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES MADE AVAILABLE TO THEM. IN THIS PARTNERSHIP THESE INDIVIDUALS ARE GIVEN WORK EXPERIENCE AND ADDITIONAL TRAINING AT OUR MEMBER'S ORGANIZATIONS THUS IMPROVING THEIR ABILITY TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF PREVIOUSLY OUT OF REACH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. THIS MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP ALSO ALLOWS THEM TO HAVE THE BASIS BY WHICH THEY CAN START THEIR OWN ACCOUNT BUSINESSES.

ANOTHER PARTNERSHIP LAUNCHED BY JEF IS THE YOUTH CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME. THIS IS A SPECIAL TRIPARTITE PROPOSAL COMPRISING JEF, THE JAMAICA HOTEL AND TOURIST ASSOCIATION AND THE JAMAICA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. THE PROGRAMME IS DESIGNED TO TARGET SCHOOL DROPOUTS WHO ARE MOST AT RISK OF BEING RECRUITED IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES; IN OTHER WORDS, THOSE MOST IN NEED OF THE OPPORTUNITY.

ANOTHER INITIATIVE IN PROMOTING DECENT WORK IS THE EMPLOYER OF CHOICE COMPETITION HOSTED BY MY FEDERATION. THIS COMPETITION AND AWARDS PROCESS SEEKS TO IMPROVE THE PRODUCTIVITY AND COMPETITIVENESS OF ENTERPRISES THROUGH THEIR ATTRACTION, EMPLOYMENT AND RETENTION OF THE BEST WORKERS. THIS COMPETITION MANDATES THAT ENTERPRISES ASSESS THEIR POLICIES AND STRATEGIES INCLUDING LABOUR MANAGEMENT RELATIONS, WORKING CONDITIONS, LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, COMMUNICATION WITH EMPLOYERS, EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION, OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH, PUBLIC RELATIONS/IMAGE AND WAGES AND BENEFITS.

THESE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES ARE EVALUATED BY EXPERTS AND WORKERS IN THE BUSINESS. EMPLOYERS ARE PROVIDED WITH A STATUS REPORT ON COMPLETION ON THE COMPETITION. FROM THE FOREGOING A NUMBER OF FACTORS BECOME CLEAR. FIRST THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENTERPRISE IS ESSENTIAL TO THE REMOVAL OF SUBSTANDARD WORKING CONDITIONS AS NEW AND PROSPEROUS ENTERPRISES PROVIDE DECENT EMPLOYMENT WORKING CONDITIONS. THE FAILURE TO THIS CONTRIBUTES TO THE BRAIN DRAIN

SECONDLY, ENTERPRISES MAY NOT PROSPER OUTSIDE OF AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH BUSINESS PROCESSES ARE RELATIVELY EASY, CREDIT IS AVAILABLE, TECHNOLOGY IS AFFORDABLE AND AVAILABLE, GOVERNMENT IS FACILITATORY AND WORKERS ARE PRODUCTIVE.

THIRDLY, THE PROVISION OF DECENT WORK DOES NOT HANG ONLY ON THE ENTERPRISES BUT ALSO ON THE SOCIO-POLITICO ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THEY OPERATE.

FOURTHLY, THERE IS NEED TO DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATENESS OF HAVING A UNIVERSAL STANDARD OF DECENT WORK IN THE CONTEXT THAT SOME ENTERPRISES OPERATE IN COUNTRIES WHERE THE POLITICAL OR CULTURAL-LEGAL FRAMEWORK DO NOT SUPPORT SOME OF THE NOTIONS OF DECENT WORK THAT ARE INTERNATIONALLY HELD.

FIFTHLY GLOBALISATION HAS AFFECTED SOME SMALL BUSINESSES IN A NEGATIVE WAY AND THIS HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF SOME SEGMENTS OF POPULATIONS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. THIS POINTS TO THE NEED FOR SUPPORT MECHANISMS THAT OPERATE AT THE ENTERPRISE LEVEL TO PREPARE ENTERPRISES FOR GLOBALISATION.

IN MY COUNTRY, THERE HAS BEEN INCREASED FOCUS ON THE ROLE OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE AS THE ENGINE OF DEVELOPMENT. THIS HAS TRANSFORMED THE STRUCTURE OF THE

LABOUR MARKET AND APPEARS TO HAVE BORNE FRUIT AS THE MAIN INDICATORS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ARE GETTING BETTER. IN THIS REGARD, THE UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURE HAS FALLEN FROM CLOSE TO 20% TO LESS THAN 12% IN THE LAST 10 YEARS. SIMILARLY, THE FIGURE FOR POVERTY HAS FALLEN FROM 30% IN 1989 TO LESS THAN 15% IN 2004.

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT A GREAT DEAL OF THIS SUCCESS IS RELATED TO THE INCREASED IMPORTANCE OF ENTERPRISE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECONOMY. THIS NOTION IS SUPPORTED BY THE FACT THAT OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS, THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AS AN EMPLOYER HAS SHRUNKEN FROM CLOSE TO 50% OF EMPLOYMENT TO LESS THAN 13% IN 2004. CONVERSELY THE PROPORTION OF SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS HAS RISEN FROM CLOSE TO 10% 15 YEARS AGO TO OVER 34% IN 2004.

OUR INTERVENTION HAS HIGHLIGHTED THE FACT THAT COLLABORATION BETWEEN YOUNG ENTERPRISES AND THE SUPPORT OF AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT ARE CATALYSTS FOR THE SUCCESS OF THESE BUSINESSES.

ALL CONSIDERED, IT IS CLEAR THAT ENTERPRISES, GOVERNMENTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY NEED TO COLLABORATE TO HASTEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMERGING ENTITIES IN DEVELOPING ECONOMIES. THIS COLLABORATIVE APPROACH WILL ENSURE THAT THE ISSUES ATTENDANT ON THE SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT OF ENTERPRISE AND ON THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE CREATION OF DECENT WORK WILL BE RESOLVED.

IN CONCLUDING, I POINT TO WHAT I HAVE PRESENTED NOT NECESSARILY AS THE FINAL OR INDEED THE COMPLETE WORD ON THE SUBJECT. RATHER, I HAVE TRIED TO PRESENT PERSPECTIVES THAT I BELIEVE COULD CONTRIBUTE TO DISCUSSIONS THAT WILL FUEL THE DEVELOPMENT OF APPROPRIATE POLICY AND SPUR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF APPROPRIATE ACTION AS WE PURSUE THE GOAL OF DECENT WORK FOR ALL. I THANK YOU.

JACQUELINE COKE-LLOYD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
JEF
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