

Customs Commissioner Stresses Sovereignty and Global Cooperation in Tackling Transnational Crime



At a National Security Council Seminar on Thursday (Feb. 6), where Prime Minister Andrew Holness made a major announcement regarding the expansion of Jamaica Customs Agency's (JCA) collaboration with international partners to combat transnational crime, Customs Commissioner emphasized the delicate balance between maintaining national sovereignty and fostering global cooperation.

The seminar, held at the AC Hotel by Marriott Kingston, was an important platform for discussing Jamaica's ongoing efforts to tackle complex criminal networks, including the recent move to sign a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement with the United States. The agreement, once finalized, is expected to strengthen the exchange of critical

customs related information, improving both nations' ability to combat organized crime and enhance border security.

In her contribution to the panel discussion, the Customs Commissioner Dr. Velma Ricketts Walker, underlined that national security must remain firmly rooted in Jamaica's sovereignty, while acknowledging the necessity of global collaboration in addressing transnational crime. "We must strike a delicate balance between asserting our national sovereignty and engaging in the global fight against transnational organised crime," she stated. "Jamaica is a small island nation, and while our security frameworks must account for our size and resources, we must also recognise that the scope of modern crime requires cooperation beyond borders."

She noted that Jamaica has been engaging with international partners in the fight against crime for decades, learning from both successes and challenges. "Jamaica has been working with international partners for many years, and while we are continuously learning, we must continue to build upon this foundation," she explained. "The fight against transnational crime is ongoing and evolving, and it requires constant adaptation."

The Commissioner stressed the importance of aligning Jamaica's national security policies with international standards and multilateral frameworks, particularly those of organizations like the United Nations and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). This alignment is critical for ensuring that Jamaica's efforts complement broader regional and global security strategies, strengthening both national and international efforts to combat criminal organizations.

"Policies in Jamaica must be reflective of a broader international vision, one that balances national interests with global obligations," she said. "Multilateral cooperation is key, as criminal organizations are increasingly sophisticated and operate across multiple jurisdictions. By aligning our efforts with international standards and strategies, we strengthen our own security while contributing to global peace and stability."

She also underscored the complexity of securing borders in an interconnected world, where criminal networks continue to operate without boundaries. "As you know, criminal networks continue to operate without borders. They are looking at our financial systems, identifying the gaps, and exploiting them to advance their illicit enterprises," she stated. "However, notwithstanding that, we are also charged with the responsibility of securing our borders and protecting our citizens."