

## World Habitat Day

Every year on the first Monday in October, Jamaica joins countries around the globe in observing World Habitat Day which highlights the right of all citizens to adequate shelter. It reminds us of our collective responsibility to ensure the sustainability of both our built and natural environment.

Today, approximately half of the world's populations live in urban centres and this is expected to increase to 70% by the year 2030 as more and more people seek access to work, educational and health facilities, proper infrastructure and other basic services, which is often more easily available in urban centres. "Better City, Better Life", is the theme for this year's commemoration of World Habitat Day. Interestingly, it reflects the Ministry's own slogan, "Building Communities, Improving Lives", as we too are concerned with improving the quality of life for residents in all socio-economic groups. Today, as urban populations increase, the challenge facing governments is the provision of adequate affordable housing, without placing undue pressure on amenities. Over the years, balancing the provision of affordable housing with demand, particularly in or near our urban centres has had little success. The exponential growth of squatter communities attests to this fact. But, despite limited resources, the Jamaican government continues to place priority on initiatives to deal with the informal occupation of land and to create vibrant and sustainable communities. Upgrading and regularizing the tenure of residents remain at the forefront of our efforts. So, this Ministry will be seeking to fast track the provision of titles and access to proper infrastructure. Our Social Housing Programme therefore, continues to assist individuals or families at, or below the poverty line, to access adequate shelter.