Government Supporting Creative Economy Development, Cites Need for Data to Accelerate Growth

The Government led by Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller has been developing Jamaica’s cultural and creative industries in support of the country’s numerous world-renown cultural icons and brands, Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce Anthony Hylton has observed. He noted however that despite these efforts, there is the need for data to accelerate growth in the sector.

Minister Hylton was speaking at the Mona Visitor’s Lodge on the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies in St. Andrew on Friday (February 5) during a National Cultural and Creative Industries Commission (NCCIC) symposium. The event brought together learning institutions, government entities, and private companies and individuals in an effort to stimulate more and better research on the creative economy. He was delivering the keynote address on behalf of Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, who chairs the Commission.

“Our creative professionals continue to deliver dynamic performances, innovations, products and services. There is no shortage of cultural and creative activity in Jamaica; where Jamaica falls short is gathering data on these activities,” the Minister noted.

The government requires data to guide policy development and decision-making, he noted, adding that Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller has given a mandate for a data-driven and evidence-based approach to governance. He also reminded participants at the symposium that Jamaica’s bilateral and multi-lateral partners also require more and better data in order to justify their assistance programmes, while local financial institutions need economic data in order to provide financial services to cultural and creative industries (CCI) customers.

Mr. Hylton observed that over the last several years, the Government of Jamaica has set and achieved notable goals designed to boost Jamaica’s creative economy. He pointed to the inscription of the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park as a National Heritage Site; the designation of Kingston as a Creative City of Music; advancing work on a National Craft Policy, and the certification of Jamaican Jerk through his Ministry and the Jamaica Intellectual Property Office.

He said that after a number of consultations through the NCCIC, the Creative Economy Policy Framework Document is now a reality while the revision of Jamaica’s Culture Policy is underway through the Ministry of Youth and Culture. Intellectual Property legislation has also been introduced and a Jamaica Film Festival established.
Mr. Hylton underscored that the staging of the symposium was a way for the government to come together with academics and researchers to establish partnerships to provide the data to move the creative industries forward.

Giving the sector a specific mandate, Mr. Hylton said, the CCI Research Agenda must place the country in the position to:

- forecast what percentage of the economic growth will come from creativity and culture;
- more accurately identify the contribution of all CCIs to GDP or to national employment;
- identify the number of creative workers in this country who contribute to the economy; and
- capture the true data on the export creative goods and services.

“We want to partner with research institutions and individuals to determine a robust CCI research agenda,” Minister Hylton stated.

“With the right blend of evidence-based interventions, a facilitating legal framework, targeted activities, and more coordinated support and investment landscape, Jamaica is well placed to grow and develop a viable and enviable creative economy”, Mr. Hylton said.

In his address to the symposium, Minister of Finance and Planning Dr. Peter Phillips said the challenge that Jamaica faces is to maximize the economic returns from its cultural and creative energies including the country’s sporting prowess, music and food, among other attributes.

Dr. Phillips acknowledged that over the years Jamaica has become more adept at the artistic aspects of culture rather than converting that cultural creativity into economic and financial value.

Observing that Jamaican culture was taking place in a global context, he noted that if Jamaica wanted a slice of that international economic activity in the cultural and creative industry, the country must create the environment for competitiveness. “Government is working to establish the overarching economic environment to make for greater competitiveness and a more beneficial business environment,” he informed.

Dr. Phillips disclosed that the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) is developing a business plan for the creative industries, to explore the global business opportunities that exist. It is also seeking to examine the appropriate legislative and institutional framework needed to propel the critical targeted industries into playing a greater role in the world economy.

Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister Mrs. Elaine Foster-Allen, who opened the Symposium, said the National Taskforce on the Cultural and Creative Industries needed more and better data to develop a culturally specific and unique policy model for the Jamaican Cultural Industries in keeping with trends for cultural sectors worldwide.

She said that the taskforce needed data to aid in identifying the challenges that hinder success in the sector, as well as to review local and international trade policies, practices and protocols with a view to informing domestic policy.

Chair of the Inter-ministerial Working Group on CCIs Dr. Deborah Hickling in her presentation on Jamaica’s Creative Economy Policy Framework, highlighted the vast potential of the creative economy, identifying 21 broad areas of job creation as well as opportunities for investments, including research.
and development; marketing and nation branding; training and certification; provision of facilities and business incubation.

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