



DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

PRESS RELEASE

Former sugar workers lauds the EU and Government of Jamaica for new homes

"What I'm experiencing now is a wonderful thing; a big big improvement on where we are coming from. I give thanks to the Prime Minister for joining with the European Union to provide this opportunity for us. I am sick and wheelchair bound and look I can move around comfortably in here. Hurricane ah come, I don't have to worry", said 58 year old Ercelyn Black, a former Field Supervisor at the Frome Estate as she sat beaming in her living room in Barham, Westmoreland. Ercelyn is one of 84 beneficiaries who will reside in the new housing units which were constructed at three sites in the parish under the EU supported Sugar Barracks relocation project.

Keys to the new homes were officially handed over this morning at a ceremony in Shrewsberry, Westmoreland which was attended by Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, Agriculture Minister Roger Clarke and Charge d'Affaires of the European Union in Jamaica, **Jesús Orús Báguena**. Addressing more than two hundred persons who had gathered to mark the occasion Mr. Orús Báguena stressed that the EU places high emphasis on projects which impact people *"We believe the transformation of the sugar sector would have failed if there was no focus on addressing the needs of the people affected by the restructuring of the industry and showing gratitude to those whose work have over the years allowed the sugar industry to thrive. It was on this basis that it was decided that all residents of the sugar estates barracks, where living conditions were oftentimes difficult, were to be relocated to new housing developed on Excluded Estate Lands. This particular initiative of social protection is critical in reducing poverty and enhancing development and I must commend the Jamaican Government and Ministry of Agriculture for working with us in the execution of this strategy."*

The units which consist of two or three bedrooms, bathroom, a living and dining area and kitchen and full utility services were provided to the beneficiaries at no cost. The units were assigned based on family size. The houses have been constructed at seven sites in the parishes of Clarendon, Westmoreland, St. Thomas and Trelawny. The relocation process is being undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture and at its completion will see the resettlement of some 876 residents from poor conditions in former sugar housing units onto new developments on lands reserved during the divestment of the sugar industry.

The total project will cost an estimated **JMD \$2.4 Billion** and is an initiative of the Government, with funding from the European Union. The Sugar Barracks relocation project is a component of a wider EU support to the sugar sector of more than **JMD \$21.3 Billion** between 2006 and 2017, of which close to **JMD\$14 Billion** has already been disbursed. These funds have the aim of assisting in the economic diversification, social resilience and environmental sustainability of sugar dependent areas.

For more information:

Contact- Jodi Brown-Lindo
Delegation of the European Union to Jamaica,
Belize, Turks and Caicos Islands, Bahamas and the Cayman Islands
Tel: 1 876 924 6333