



**PRESS RELEASE  
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**The Church has a crucial role to play in national development – Minister Chang**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, the Hon. Dr Horace Chang, says the government is committed to working in partnerships to uphold the principle of democracy and the right to religious freedom.

He mentioned that while the government seeks to pursue a policy of partnership with the private sector, partnering with the churches, and with various sectors of society to ensure there is inclusiveness and effective development, is also critical.

**“This government’s commitment to work in partnership between agencies of the state and private sector is what is going to ensure that the country can grow and achieve the kind of prosperity we all desire. Crucial to this, is our partnership with the churches,”** Minister Chang stated.

He was the keynote speaker at the Annual Western Leadership Conference and 80<sup>th</sup> Celebration Launch at the Seventh Day Adventist West Jamaica Conference, in Mt. Salem, Montego Bay on Sunday, October 22.

He said the government is committed to upholding the principle of democracy and the fundamental right to religious freedom, which is one of the pillars of the government.

Minister Chang stated that across Jamaica, the church continues to signal its intention to be a significant contributor to national development; citing the thirty-eight (38) Haitians housed at Robins Bay at a facility owned by the Seventh Day Adventists as an example.

**“The church in Jamaica continues to play a critical role as a partner in reaching the less privileged and while we know that the work of resolving criminal violence will take more than just policing, the church has played a crucial part in educating and caring for those who find it hard to achieve in our communities. The Church has acted as peace-brokers in helping to make it possible for citizens to move about safely in their communities,”** he said.

In addition, Minister Chang praised the work of the National Partnership Council, stating that along with the government, it provides the context for dialogue and collaboration on matters of national concern and importance.

The Council is comprised of representatives from the government, trade unions, civil society groups, the opposition, the private sector, the church, representatives from the women's, youth and academic groups.

**“We look forward to working closely with the churches because no better can come from anywhere outside the churches. We can train individuals as pastors; we can train them as psychologists, psychiatrists, and others, but for those who are believers in Christ and have the spirit within them to speak with commitment and sincerity, about what is right, the church is where to find those persons,”** the security minister said.

He reasoned that partnerships with churches stand as a crucial platform on which the country can stand and that reaching everyone in the society to get rid of the bizarre, brutal behaviour that seems to characterize the norm in the society, means continued assistance and partnership with the church.