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Jamaicans in Diaspora must be more Active in Disaster Preparedness Programmes - Ambassador Shirley

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Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States, Professor Gordon Shirley has called on Jamaicans in the Diaspora to be more active in the nation's disaster preparedness programmes.

"Given the extent of the resources available to us, it is time for the Diaspora to also begin to lead in ensuring that the country moves with great speed to protect itself before the onset of hurricanes," he emphasised.

Ambassador Shirley was addressing stakeholders and participants at the Jamaica Diaspora Day 2005 Symposium at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in midtown Manhattan, on Saturday, June 11.

"If we can mitigate and develop our society in an appropriate way, we can prevent any significant damage to our basic infrastructure," he pointed out.

Professor Shirley also stressed that now was an opportune time for the Diaspora to harness the available resources to move the country's development agenda forward.

The symposium, which marked the one-year anniversary of the establishment of the Jamaica Diaspora Foundation (JDF), also heard presentations from a number of stakeholders, including Elisa Fershtadt, Vice President of Ruder Finn Agency; George Watson, Executive Director of Jamaica Homecoming 2005; Yvonne Coke of Hand Across Jamaica For Righteousness; Becky Stockhousen, Director of the American Chamber of Commerce/Grant's Pen Initiative; Sharon McLean, Health and Andrene Bonner, Education.

The symposium was hosted by the Embassy of Jamaica and Jamaica Impact, Inc., in recognition of the historic milestone of the Jamaica Diaspora Conference, which was held at the Jamaica Conference Centre in Kingston, on June 16, 2004.

June 16 of each year has since been proclaimed Jamaica Diaspora Day by the Governor General.