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PRESENTATION ON THE VI INTER-AMERICAN MEETING OF MINISTERS AND HIGH AUTHORITIES OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

(National Summit Coordinator of Jamaica, Ambassador Janice Miller)

The Sixth Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities of Science and Technology (the Sixth REMCYT, pronounced as the Sixth REM SIT) was held virtually on December 7 and 8, 2021.

Ministers and High Authorities of 32 OAS Member States adopted the Declaration of Jamaica, “Harnessing the Power of Transformative Science and Technologies to Drive our Communities Forward” and agreed to refer three (3) recommendations for consideration by the IX Summit of the Americas.

The Ministerial Meeting was opened by the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Honourable Andrew Holness, the OAS Secretary General, Luis Almagro, and the Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the OAS and the then-President of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CIDI), Her Excellency Audrey P. Marks Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the OAS.

The constructive discussions at the Sixth REMCYT analyzed how to expand regional collaboration and cooperation in promoting the use of science, technology and innovation to address development needs and in contributing to solving the region's urgent priorities in the post-pandemic recovery.

Some of the key areas addressed were:

- Science and Technology to Build Resiliency and COVID-19 recovery
- Youth: Improving Skills and Readiness for Industry 4.0.
- Science, Technology, Innovation (STI) and Entrepreneurship to reduce the digital divide and promote the inclusion of women and girls, rural and indigenous communities, and other populations in vulnerable situations
- Levelling the playing field for active participation in the global economy by MSMEs through STI
- Technology Foresight as Input for Public Policy Decisions (Prospecta Americas)
- Science for Decision Making
- Effective public-private-academia collaboration to enhance competitiveness and quality of life.

In the Declaration of Jamaica, Ministers and High Authorities of Science and Technology:

- Established a framework to advance results-oriented regional cooperation on science, technology and innovation in the Americas for the period 2022-2024.
- Made a Call to Action for the region to respond with urgency to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and to make Science, Technology and Innovation a fundamental component of the economic recovery and an integral factor to promote inclusive, green, resilient and sustainable growth in the societies of the Western Hemisphere.

These outcomes were made against the recognition by Ministers of the deepening of existing inequalities made worse by Covid-19 and which have increased the educational gap for students, especially those in the lower socioeconomic bracket; increased unemployment; worsened labour conditions in the region and disproportionately affected women, marginalized and vulnerable individuals, youth and the less skilled.

Given the acceleration of the digital economy and the reshaping of global value chains, Ministers emphasized the need for OAS member states to address the skills gap and to increase workplace readiness so as to benefit from the potential offered by the science and innovation-driven economy.

It was recognized that science and innovation-driven sector and technologies can create opportunities for the jobs of the future, accelerate progress, address climate change, assist in poverty alleviation and the reduction of inequality and, contribute to improved economic autonomy for women, youth and marginalized and vulnerable groups. Particular emphasis was given by Ministers to the youth being able to increase opportunities to obtain skills building, earn accredited qualifications to allow them to access the jobs of the future and, participate in a labour market characterized by transformative technologies.

Recommendations from the Declaration of Jamaica to the IX Summit of the Americas

Ministers agreed to refer the following recommendations of the Declaration of Jamaica to the Ninth Summit of the Americas, to be held in the United States in 2022 (paragraph 22 of the Declaration of Jamaica):

a) Connectivity for ALL in the Americas

In order to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, reduce the widening technological and social gaps, and pursue a sustainable, green, resilient and equitable future, there should be an urgent regional call to action to close the digital divide and promote secure, reliable connectivity for ALL to high-quality broadband services at affordable prices in all of our countries, with a special focus on access for women, youth, rural and indigenous communities and individuals within traditionally underrepresented groups or populations in vulnerable situations.

b) Youth Academy on Transformative Science and Technologies for the Americas

To harness the power of transformative science and technologies to drive our communities forward and address our youth's skills gap and readiness to participate in the digital and innovation-driven economies and societies, to support the launch of the "Americas Youth Academy on

Transformative Science and Technologies” with concrete offers of cooperation and partnership opportunities to serve up to 100,000 youth by 2026, to support those most affected by the pandemic, including students in lower socioeconomic status, women, minorities, and less skilled workers.

c) Centers of Excellence Prospecta Americas

To promote the use of science and technology to address the main imperatives concerning integral development in the Americas and to solve pressing challenges in the region, such as food security, health, education, security, energy, disaster mitigation and preparedness, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, COVID-19 and other challenges. Support for the development of an OAS Regional Network of Centers of Excellence focused on top transformative science and technologies to improve collaboration on research, sharing of science and data driven inputs for decision making, enhancing the acquisition and distribution of knowledge of transformative technologies, so as to assess potential risks and promote collaboration in the Americas.