

World Bank opens new office in C'bean

By KINGSTON/CMC

The World Bank Group has officially opened its new, energy-efficient offices here, which will serve as the hub for its Caribbean operations.

The building brings the Bank's Caribbean team together in one physical space, which will strengthen the institution's presence and support in Jamaica and the wider region.

In 2021, the World Bank moved its Caribbean operations from Washington DC to the island as part of a strategic shift to decentralise functions to the field offices.

Minister without Portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister with responsibility for Efficiency, Innovation and Digital Transformation, Ambassador Audrey Marks, commended the move by the Bank.

'Today's opening of the World Bank's Belmont office is not only the launch of a new workplace. It is a visible statement of long-term partnership, trust and shared ambition between Jamaica and the World Bank,' she said.

Marks said the World Bank has been a key development partner, noting the impact of the institution's support in building the foundations of a modern, digital economy and strong institutions with capable systems, and a workforce prepared for the future.

'For decades, the World Bank has walked alongside Jamaica at pivotal moments in our developing journey. From strengthening economic resilience, supporting institutional reform and social investment, this partnership has consistently been anchored in a shared belief that sustainable development must be inclusive, forward-looking and people-centred, and in many ways, this building exemplifies that belief,' she said.

The World Bank supports Jamaica's development through a 2024-2027 framework focusing on human capital, economic growth, and resilience. Key activities include financing education, healthcare, and social protection. The Bank also invests in disaster risk reduction, private sector modernisation, and climate resilience projects.

Country Director for Caribbean Countries, World Bank, Lilia Burunciuc, in her remarks, said that the new building reflects the Bank's focus on sustainability.

'We are very proud of this. Our mission is a world free of poverty on a liveable planet. So, the liveable planet is an important part of it, and we would like to implement what we preach, which is energy efficiency, environmental consciousness, and sustainability, which is what this office is about.'

'It's not only a new, beautiful building that actually increases our productivity, but it also an Excellence in Design for Greater Efficiencies (EDGE)-certified building. EDGE certification is an advanced certification, which is actually a global standard for measuring

energy, for measuring weather and the overall efficiency of the building,' she pointed out. The EDGE certification, which is an International Finance Corporation (IFC)- created green building certification system, will enable the office to consume 65% lower energy, 42% lower weather use and 25% lower inverted energy.

Burunciuc, who assumed office in Jamaica on July 1, 2021, said when she arrived in the island, 'it was the first time that a director for the region was being sent to the region'.

'The previous director was sitting in Washington,' she pointed out.

Burunciuc said that the Jamaica office at the time was small, with persons having to share space.

'Finally, we have a new [building] where everybody has an office. We had to share, sometimes two, sometimes three people in the previous office, so we're very happy to be here today,' she said.