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Brussels 14 January 2019/ACP/: Minister of Transport and Mining, Hon. Robert Montague, says the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP)-European Union (EU) Development Minerals Programme has assisted stakeholders in the mining sector to embrace international standards.

The ACP-EU Development Minerals Programme is a three-year, €13.1 million capacity building project, which is an initiative of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States, and coordinated by the ACP Secretariat.

It is financed by the European Commission and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and implemented by the UNDP.

Since its inception, it has successfully brought development minerals to the forefront of policymaking. At the country level, the Programme carried out capacity-building activities in six focus countries, including training, workshops, small grants, production of maps and databases, development of regulations on environment and safety, organisation of community dialogues, technology fairs and networking events.

At the final Conference for the ACP-EU Development Minerals Programme in Jamaica on Wednesday (January 9), held at the Courtleigh Hotel and Suites in New Kingston, Minister Montague expressed his gratitude to the sponsors and the implementing agency of the Programme.

He said the Programme has helped the country to lay the critical groundwork to enable us to move forward in increasing productivity in the development minerals industry, better manage the quarrying operations, adhere to national and international environmental health standards and prevent conflict through effective community relations.

The Minister also noted that the Programme has provided numerous benefits to the country.

"We have seen improvement in our job situation, as more persons gain jobs within the industry. We have seen improvement in environmental standards, the health and safety standards within the industry and we have seen a better appreciation by the wider Jamaica of the value of the industry," he said.

Mr. Montague said with the help of the ACP-EU Development Minerals Programme, the Ministry of Transport and Mining is moving to enhance the viability and the feasibility of the mining industry.

"This ACP-EU Programme, in partnership with the UNDP, has really done a lot to open our eyes as a country and to fit within our country programme, what we would want to do for the mining sector," he added.

In a pre-recorded testimonial video from an entrepreneur and beneficiary, Wazari Johnson, who makes clay and ceramic items from raw materials collected through the Programme in 2018, he said the ACP-EU Development Minerals Programme has helped his company in going a far way in buying more raw materials in bulk and being able to train unattached youth.

"We participated in a business workshop and we had a wonderful exercise, a workshop that gave entrepreneurial insights in terms of record keeping, marketing and how to structure a business plan," he said.

Mr. Johnson was also the recipient of a grant from the UNDP of US\$5,000 for his business.

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