A ten member monitoring committee has been established to oversee the restructuring exercise being conducted in the Ministry of Health (MOH). The decision was taken at a meeting, yesterday (January 28), between the Minister of Health, Hon. Rudyard Spencer, and over twenty-eight bargaining units representing all unionized workers in the health sector.

The membership of the monitoring team comprises representatives from the Jamaica Civil Service Association (JCSA), the Nurses Association of Jamaica (NAJ), Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU), National Workers Union (NWU), Jamaica Medical Doctors' Association, Association of Government Medical Consultants, Council of Paramedics, Jamaica Association of Public Health Inspectors, Jamaica Confederation of Trade Unions, and the Jamaica Midwives Association.

In justifying the establishment of the committee, Minister Spencer said that the work of the team is critical to the success of the restructuring exercise. "I know, from experience, that it is better to have our workers represented at the table, participating in the process and influencing the outcome in a meaningful way than to have them on the periphery," he said.

Outlining the broader restructuring programme being led by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Minister Spencer informed the meeting that the Ministry has eighteen months within which to complete the implementation. He said that the changes must be made while ensuring that quality is not compromised.

The Monitoring Committee will meet monthly to discuss the progress of the exercise and to address emerging issues.

Earlier yesterday the Minister also met with the six councils: the Medical Council, the Dental Council, the Nursing Council, the Pharmacy Council, the Council for the Professions Supplementary to Medicine, and the Child Care & Protection Advisory Council, to provide an update on the restructuring exercise. In mid February, the councils will be submitting, to the Minister, proposals on how costs can be contained and revenues increased.

An Inter-Disciplinary Transition Team has been established in the Ministry of Health to coordinate the management of the restructuring exercise, the objectives of which are to achieve cost efficiencies, reduce waste and eliminate duplication of functions.

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