



**For Immediate Release  
September 29, 2017  
Kingston, Jamaica**

## **34,000 JAMAICANS TO PRIME MINISTER HOLNESS – “SAVE COCKPIT COUNTRY!”**

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Over Thirty-Four Thousand concerned Jamaican citizens led by the Jamaica Environment Trust (JET) are celebrating their success in exceeding the targeted 15,000 signatures for a Save Cockpit Country petition directed at Prime Minister, the Most Honourable Andrew Holness. The petition which calls on the Prime Minister to establish the boundary of Cockpit Country, close the area to mining, quarrying and prospecting, and declare Cockpit Country a Protected National Park, has attracted 19,988 signatures online and 14,106 signatures in hard copy at the time of writing.

The petition was first launched using the new online petition portal hosted by the Office of the Prime Minister on August 21, and was circulated in hard copy shortly thereafter. “Whilst promoting the Save Cockpit Country campaign and online petition, we discovered that many Jamaican citizens were not online, but wished to sign the petition,” said Suzanne Stanley, JET Deputy CEO. “These people were given the alternative to sign a hard copy of the Save Cockpit Country petition, which has been circulated throughout many Jamaican communities, including those in Cockpit Country.”

The final deadline for the online petition, as set by the OPM’s online petition portal, is tomorrow, Saturday, September 30. JET has formally requested a special meeting between the Prime Minister and representatives of the Cockpit Country to mark the achievement of the online petition and hand over the signed hard copy petitions.

Cockpit Country is the largest remaining natural forest in Jamaica. The fresh water it stores and releases via almost 40 rivers, streams, springs, upwellings, glades and ponds supplies about 40% of Western Jamaica’s water needs. Protection of Cockpit Country also promotes climate resilience in the face of Global Climate Change. It is also home to many Jamaican endemic plants and animals, some of which are only found in Cockpit Country. The area is also an important cultural and historical site for Jamaicans, particularly the Maroons, who still live within its borders.

For over a decade the Government of Jamaica has delayed defining a boundary for Cockpit Country, which is under immediate threat from bauxite mining. Bauxite mining in Cockpit Country would remove forest cover, block and pollute waterways, displace residents, threaten agricultural livelihoods, compromise air quality and threaten the health and wellbeing of thousands of Jamaican citizens.

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