



**MESSAGE TO THE JAMAICAN DIASPORA
BY THE PRIME MINISTER
THE MOST HON. PORTIA SIMPSON MILLER, ON, MP**

**On the Occasion of Jamaica's 53rd Anniversary of Independence
August 6, 2015**

Independence 53 provides for Jamaica and Jamaicans at home and in the Diaspora a timely moment for reflection. At this juncture in our history and development as a nation and people we reflect on the road we have travelled; the significant social, economic and political advances we have made; and the challenges we have encountered and overcome. It is also a time when we ponder the developmental challenges that remain and fashion strategies and approaches to mobilising the nation to surmount them.

Our resolve to face the future with confidence and stand in the present with purposeful determination is strengthened by the many national successes of the past. One of our earliest, proudest and most enduring achievements has been our exemplary democratic tradition that has stood the test of time. Our mature democracy continues to guarantee our people important social, economic, political and religious freedoms that have now been enshrined in a Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms anchored in the Constitution of Jamaica.

It is on this time-honoured achievement that we stand today to proclaim our Independence theme this year: **"Proud and Free: Jamaica 53"**.

It is in this context too, that we continue to give true meaning to the Jamaica's motto that symbolises the very essence of our national life, history and mission: "Out of Many, One People."

At 53, in this environment of freedom, Jamaica has produced an invaluable array of human capital that continues to represent our greatest national asset for social development and economic growth. It is our people, supported by a system of high quality education and relevant world class training that must now provide the next great leap forward for the nation. This advance must, of necessity, be fuelled by innovation and the remarkable creativity for which Jamaica and its people are world-renowned.

Since January 2012 the Government of Jamaica has embarked on a courageous and successful effort to reform the Jamaican economy, correcting once and for all, some of the structural weaknesses that have contributed to our country's high indebtedness, low growth levels, high unemployment, and less than satisfactory investments in growth-inducing infrastructure and other areas of social capital development. The Economic Reform Programme is a national call to social and economic action involving commitment, responsibility, patience and sacrifice on the part of all members of our national family.

Already we have seen a tremendous improvement in Jamaica's 'Ease of Doing Business' ranking by the World Bank, inflation has been reduced to its lowest level in 48 years, and our investment in the education of our people as a share of the national budget is among the highest in the Caribbean and Latin American Region. Additionally, we have positively transformed the country's physical and economic infrastructure including our network of highways, Jamaica's international credit rating has consistently been upgraded, and our Island continues to be the destination of choice for a growing number of vacationers and investors.

Our ability to enjoy additional and greater benefits of the on-going economic reforms requires consistency and steadfastness on the part of all Jamaicans as we continue to advance the programme of economic improvement for our country. At the same time, we all have to recommit ourselves in every way possible to engaging in better social relations that can produce peace, harmony and tolerance in our individual families, in our communities and in our nation at large.

Triumph over these remaining challenges of nationhood is not beyond us.

I thank all persons, groups and sectors of the Jamaican society at home and in the Diaspora who have made their invaluable contributions to Jamaica's growth and development over the past 53 years. At this time, our country needs your continued support to remain proud, free and to achieve lasting peace and prosperity in the years ahead.

Happy Independence! One Love!

**Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, ON, MP
Prime Minister**