



Washington D.C. — Jamaica has been lauded by President of the United States (US), Barak Obama, for its continued leadership within the Caribbean, as well as its commitment to democracy, prosperity and security of the Region.

The President made his comments at a brief ceremony in the Oval Office at the White House on July 30, where he received the credentials of Ambassador to the United States, Professor Stephen Vasciannie.

“Over the years, we have come to know Jamaica as a leader in the Caribbean. As one of the largest countries in the Caribbean community, Jamaica is an indispensable partner in programmes such as the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI) and is a leading political voice in the region,” the President said.

“We are nearing the beginning of the third year of the CBSI, with its strong focus on a collaborative approach to ensuring citizen safety. I am pleased that our Caribbean neighbours have worked closely with us to make it a reality. Jamaica’s contribution to our CBSI discussions have greatly strengthened the counter narcotics and counter terrorism components,” he added.

Mr. Obama said one hallmark of the close collaboration is the joint efforts “we have undertaken to counter the growing threat posed by narcotics and weapons trafficking to the security of our citizens and our economies.”

He noted that this year marks a special time in the history of the United States and Jamaica’s diplomatic relations.

“On August 6, Jamaica will celebrate 50 years of independence, and shortly thereafter, the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations with the United States. For the past 50 years, Jamaica and the United States have shared a long history of friendship, based on a mutual commitment

to democracy, prosperity, and security in the Caribbean region. Our countries have enjoyed a fruitful and co-operative relationship across a broad range of issues, including trade, investment, citizen security, and energy security,” the President said.

“Beyond the common interest of our governments, our people share an unbreakable bond and close family ties. Jamaica’s dynamic culture has deeply enriched the fabric of American society. An estimated 1.5 million Americans of Jamaican descent live in the United States and are integral parts of our country’s history and tradition, and many are among our distinguished leaders across numerous disciplines. Over 10,000 American citizens, many born on the island and dual nationals, live in Jamaica today. Visitors from the United States account for 64 percent of Jamaica’s tourism market,” he added.

The President pointed out that the US and Jamaica continue to co-operate on many shared priorities in the areas of rule of law, anti-corruption, counternarcotics, law enforcement, and promoting economic growth.

“Last March, with the Government of Jamaica’s concurrence, the United States sent delegates from our State, Justice, and Treasury departments, and USAID, to meet with top Jamaican government officials to explore ways to intensify our co-operation in education and poverty elimination,” he noted.

Welcoming the new Ambassador, Mr. Obama said he looked forward to working with Professor Vasciannie to advance their common agenda and deepen the strong and abiding friendship of both countries.

In his response, Professor Vasciannie said that as a responsible partner in the hemisphere, Jamaica remains ready to work with the United States to counter challenges to the region emanating from terrorist activities or other threats to the preservation of peace, security and democracy.

“To that end, we are pleased to be a part of the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative Commission, which we hope, in conjunction with the ongoing Merida Initiative, will stem the flow of illegal drugs into the United States and the trafficking of illicit weapons to the region,” the

Ambassador said.

Professor Vasciannie pointed out that Jamaica has been a beneficiary of a variety of co-operation programmes, for which the country is truly appreciative. He cited the US the Peace Corps, which has seen over 3,800 volunteers working in Jamaica since the inception of that programme, as well as the work of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Ambassador expressed Jamaica's profound appreciation for the continued support of the United States and extended good wishes on behalf of the Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, to the people of the US for continued peace and prosperity.

Professor Vasciannie assumed duties in Washington on July 17, after serving as Principal of the Norman Manley Law School at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus.