



Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, says Jamaica has made significant strides in the areas of politics, human rights, health care, culture and legislative reform over the last 50 years.

“As we reflect on these 50 years of our independence journey, Jamaica today is not the country it was in 1962. We have achieved much, we have made significant progress, and Jamaica is the toast of the world,” she said.

Among these achievements, she noted, are a mature Parliamentary system, and the promulgation of Commissions of Parliament, vital to the preservation of democracy.

“We can be proud of our Electoral Commission and other such institutions, which have been the product of a bipartisan parliamentary approach,” the Prime Minister said.

Mrs. Simpson Miller was speaking today (August 2), during a special joint sitting of the Houses of Parliament, in commemoration of Jamaica's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence.

The special meeting was attended by Governor-General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen and Lady Allen; Leader of the Opposition, Andrew Holness; Ministers of Government; Members of Parliament and Senators who have served since 1962; and members of the diplomatic corps.

Also in attendance were, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, and his wife, Dame Patience.

Mrs. Simpson Miller pointed out that in 50 years, Jamaica has held steadfast to the rule of law

- the principles of constitutional democracy, fundamental rights and freedoms and a growing consensus that “we in this House are servants of the people.”

She also noted that Jamaica has made significant strides in the area of health care, with an expansion and improvement of the system since Independence.

Jamaica, she said, has achieved comparable world standards in areas of infant mortality and life expectancy.

Additionally, she noted that local legislators have put into effect some of the most far reaching social legislation and reforms that have impacted the poor and marginalised in the society.

“The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our independence is an appropriate moment to pause a while, take stock, and look at ourselves before embarking on the next 50 years. It is a time of celebration, reflection, and forward-thinking,” the Prime Minister said.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Simpson Miller welcomed Dr. Jonathan and his delegation, noting that she was honoured by his participation.

She said Jamaica’s links with Nigeria go deep, noting that it was “home of some of our ancestors, some of our traditions and the origin of our bloodline.”

“While we might be separated by distance and water, we are united by blood,” she stated.

In his address, Opposition Leader, Andrew Holness, said during the past 50 years, Jamaica and Jamaicans have achieved much.

“Despite turbulent periods, we have maintained our democracy – marked from 1944 to the

present – an achievement that ancient civilisations now struggle to attain,” he said.

Mr. Holness argued that Jamaica can truly boast that it has used its political power for good in the creation of the Electoral Advisory Commission, which has now evolved into the Electoral Commission of Jamaica.

“We have moved from being viewed as having a weak electoral system to having one of the best examples of a modern electoral system serving as a template for other developing countries,” he stated.