



Today as we celebrate fifty years of political independence let us make a joyful noise to the lord for the freedom we enjoy and all other blessings he has bestowed upon us.

Let us give thanks to our pioneers particularly our national heroes and heroine who had the courage and demonstrated the fearlessness to challenge the state of affairs and the way of life that existed.

It is their sacrifices that have given us the freedom we enjoy today.

While we are jubilant in jubilee, we must be tempered with reflection and sober analysis.

We must examine where we were in 1962 to where we are now fifty years later and where we want to be fifty years hence.

As we evaluate our lives today we recognize that there are challenges.

We must accept that the quality of life of many jamaicans remains at unacceptable levels. The images of poverty are very disturbing. Corruption and inefficiency are almost institutionalized in the society.

Criminality and violence threatens our democracy and freedom, for which we fought so hard.

We might not have achieved all we dreamed of in 1962 but let us give thanks for what we have achieved. Let us give thanks for the stability of our political process. Let us give thanks

for the resilience, the power of endurance and creativity of the jamaican people.

Let us commend our workers at all levels in both the public and private sectors who despite the hardships continue to produce for the most part to the best of their abilities.

Let us recognise the efforts of our entrepreneurs who through ingenuity, creativity, innovation and a firm belief in jamaica continue to contribute to the commercial landscape.

Let us show appreciation for those in the diaspora who while on their quest for a better life have not forgotten jamaica as their homeland and continue to contribute generously to its development.

Let us pay tribute to our sportsmen and women, our artistes and performers, our cultural and literary icons who have placed jamaica in an enviable position on the world stage.

As we set our sights on the future let the past fifty years be a learning experience.

Let us continue to preserve our democracy. Let us strive to eradicate poverty and improve the capacity of our people through education and training.

Let us strengthen the protection of our women and children, the aged, the infirm and the disabled.

We must intensify the fight against corruption and inefficiency in the society.

Thanks to our fore-fathers, we have largely won political independence. The struggle going forward for the post independence generation must be to secure economic independence; to finally provide each jamaican the opportunity to access education, health and other social

amenities, provide gainful and productive employment and to raise their families in hope and security, and be empowered to contribute to the national good. This is true independence.

All of these objectives will not be realized overnight but we must never retreat, because only then will we make jamaica a place of choice to live, work, raise our families and do business.

Have a wonderful independence day.

Andrew Holness, MP

Leader of the opposition