



Fellow Jamaicans at home and abroad, I greet you on this the celebration of our Golden Jubilee—fifty years as a proud and independent nation. This is a time of special significance to those of us who experienced the pride and joy of August 6, 1962. Today we all celebrate our accomplishments and reflect on our experiences and the lessons we have learned during these fifty years. We celebrate this Independence with jubilation and commitment to our nation.

The suggestion that we have nothing to celebrate must be stubbornly resisted. The view that we have not really achieved anything of significance in our fifty years is as misguided and wrong-headed as is the illusion that everything is okay. We have our problems and our challenges, but we also have achievements which we can justifiably celebrate on this our 50th year of independence.

Jamaican be proud of our democratic stability and institutions. We can be proud of the laws we have adopted to remove gender-based discrimination, protect the rights of workers and strengthen respect for human rights in general, among others. We can be proud of our internationally recognized press freedoms and of other advances in civil and political rights.

We have made enormous strides in the social sector, with increased access to health services, post-primary education and housing. We are renown for our cultural heritage and for various world class products and services. In sports, we have stamped our dominance in spectacular and superlative ways. And at these Olympics our athletes are doing it again, to the thrill of billions of people around the world.

It must be known that we are not a people easily defeated or discouraged. Our history has proven that we are a tough, resilient, tenacious people, who are not deterred by obstacles. We draw on our traditional values to pull us through any crisis.

As we contemplate the next phase of our journey, I urge all of us to recommit to those values which will keep our families strong, our children safe and protected, our youth motivated to aspire to excellence, our communities caring and supportive; values which will advance the

peace and prosperity of our nation.

Our journey is not undertaken in isolation. Indeed, we appreciate and have benefited from the support of bilateral and international partners. We have also played our part in the advancement of global action for peace and security, respect for human rights, good governance and sustainable development.

In celebrating our Jubilee, we remember that the essential concept includes the embrace of justice and social equity —responding to the needs of the poor, the marginalized, and the weak and being good neighbours toward everyone with whom we come in contact. It is through our commitment to justice and social equity that we will deal with the challenges of corruption, greed and selfishness which have conspired to rob us of the progress we desire and deserve. Let us commit to a determined effort to right the wrongs of our past and to “Let justice run down like a river and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream”.

Jubilee also includes a call for every person to return to his/her own family during the year. It is a time for releasing captives, for freeing people from the burden of debt and for showing hospitality to visitors. In short, it is a time for magnanimity of spirit.

In this Jubilee spirit, we welcome all visitors who have come to celebrate with us. We reserve a special welcome for the thousands of Jamaicans who have come home to heighten the joy of our celebration.

Today,

- I salute all Jamaicans at home and in the Diaspora who have made service their hallmark.

- I salute the humanitarian and relief agencies and all those who serve when disasters and emergencies strike. You have succored us during our most vulnerable moments.

- I salute our Service Clubs and those NGOs working with our children and youth, women and the elderly; those working with the physically and mentally challenged; those who provide a haven for the homeless and abandoned, especially, victims of HIV-AIDS.

- I salute our young people in the uniformed groups and commend those who work with them, building character and preparing them to take on the baton of leadership.

- I salute all in the public and private sector who exemplify the spirit of Jamaica, a nation on a mission.

We are the people who popularized the phrase “One Love” internationally. Let us wave that flag to demonstrate our conviction in the messages of our National Anthem, our Motto and Pledge. We are one people, one family on a mission to develop our nation.

God bless you and God bless Jamaica, Land we love!