

INAUGURAL ADDRESS
SWEARING-IN CEREMONY OF
THE MOST HON. ANDREW MICHAEL HOLNESS, ON, MP
AS PRIME MINISTER OF JAMAICA
MARCH 3, 2016

Partnership for Prosperity

Salutations

- Your Excellencies, the Governor General, the Most Honourable Sir Patrick Allen and Lady Allen
- Leader of the Opposition the Most Honorable Portia Simpson Miller
- Former Prime Ministers:
 - The Most Honorable Edward Seaga and Mrs. Seaga
 - The Most Honorable PJ Patterson
 - The Honorable Bruce Golding and Mrs. Golding
- My fellow Jamaicans

Good afternoon.

Introductory Remarks

I recognize that I stand here today only by the Grace of God. It has not been an easy journey to this podium, but earnest labour and fervent prayers conquer all. To God be the glory.

It is with a deep sense of gratitude, honour and humility that I took the Oath of Office moments ago, fully conscious of the magnitude of expectations and responsibility I have assumed, but equally energized and optimistic about a prosperous future for Jamaica. I pledge to serve the people of Jamaica faithfully, with all of my energies, all of my heart, mind and soul.

I stand here today happy to be representing the voice, vision, vote and victory of Jamaica.

We may have different voices and different votes on a similar vision, regardless of our differences, Jamaica was victorious at the General Elections. It is not perfect, but we can all be proud of the people, systems and institutions that make up our democracy.

Meaning of the Mandate

On the day of Election, I witnessed a young man carrying, cradled in his arm, an obviously bed-ridden elderly man from a polling station. I was touched by the sight. In the bustle of the busy

school yard, as they passed, the elderly man pointed his ink stained finger at me and said, "Andrew, do the right thing!"

I stand here humbled by the awesome power of you, the people, and I commit to doing right by you. The people are sovereign and their views and votes must never be taken for granted.

The people of Jamaica did not vote in vain. They expect a government that works for them and by the same expectation, an Opposition that is constructive. This historic election delivered the smallest majority but also the clearest mandate: Fix Government!

With this mandate:

- There is no majority for arrogance
- There is no space for selfishness
- There is no place for pettiness
- There is no room for complacency and
- There is no margin for error

I am under no illusion as to the meaning of this mandate. We have not won a prize. Instead, the people are giving us a test. There is no absolute agency of power. This means that the winner cannot take all, or believe we can do it alone.

Leading Partnerships for Prosperity

To achieve the vision of shared prosperity through inclusive economic growth and meaningful job creation, now more than ever, Government must lead, activate, empower and build real partnerships. I intend to lead a Government of partnership. The solutions to our problems do not rest with Government alone. The sum total of our potential exceeds our problems; our collective capabilities are greater than our challenges, but it is only through partnership that these capabilities and this potential can be seized, harnessed and realized for the good of Jamaica.

Partnerships require trust, clear assignment of responsibility and an elevated sense of duty.

There is only so much trust that pledges and statements of commitment can buy. I understand that the Jamaican people now want to see action in building trust. This is part of fixing government. Everyone who will form the next government must be seized of this expectation. From the politician making policy to the civil servant processing an application, we must act dutifully to fulfill our responsibilities. Trust requires the actualization of our commitments. We will fulfill our commitments.

Our actions can achieve so much more if they are coordinated. We will bring greater coordination, rationality and focus to the role of government so that the objectives of partnership can be clear.

There is no doubt that significant numbers of Jamaicans have lost hope in our system, but I am encouraged that a far larger number maintains faith, keeps hope and continues to pray that Jamaica will grow and prosper.

I am energized by the expressions of willingness to work with our new Government in the interest of Jamaica. The sense of duty is alive and well. There is more hope than despair and this creates a great opportunity to form partnerships for prosperity.

Partnership with Families

You know, I am now joined in Parliament by my life partner Juliet. Family is the ultimate partnership. And that is why my Government will focus resources on supporting families.

By increasing the income tax threshold we will restore the economic power of households to participate in not only growing our GDP but more importantly growing the **general wellbeing** of the society.

Here's how the partnership with families, and the working heads of households will work.

Our government will ease your tax burden, but you must spend and invest wisely, use the additional money to acquire a house for your family or improve the house you already have, or buy Jamaican-made goods. This is how we will increase local effective demand in housing, manufacturing, and agriculture. This is how you can play a part in creating in jobs while satisfying your wellbeing.

We will continue our policy of tuition-free education and no user fee access to health care. However, will enable you to save in an education bond for your children's education and in a national health insurance scheme your healthcare.

We will enhance our social safety net for vulnerable families, and will provide support for parents in crisis, but you must be responsible and send your children to school. Our men must take care of their children, and couples must be responsible in having the children they can afford.

Our government commits to creating the environment in which families can flourish and form communities of social mobility from which every ghetto youth can be star. However, every family member must do his or her part by being personally, socially and economically responsible.

Partnership with the Opposition

I am sure Juliet will understand if I seek to build another partnership in Parliament. Leader of the Opposition, Portia Simpson Miller has given long and dedicated service to the country and I believe the mandate is saying, we may not be on the same side of the road, but as much as possible we should hold hands in cooperation to overcome obstacles for the good of the

country. We have evolved without formal structure a very good partnership in education and we intend to continue our informal collaborations in this area and pursue other such areas of cooperation between Government and Opposition members.

I still believe it is a useful symbol of national unity for the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to appear together in zones of political exclusions. I again extend the invitation.

Partnership for Growth with Private Sector

The priority of this Government is to grow the economy and create meaningful jobs. In so doing, we will more rapidly and sustainably reduce debt. I am sure we all agree that much of Jamaica's development has been achieved without growth, which has left us with much debt. This is unsustainable.

Going forward, Jamaica's development must rest on its ability to create propositions of value and attract investments to convert the value into wealth. In this model, Government is not the main investor, it is the Private Sector whether they be large enterprises or small business. In the economic partnership with the Private Sector, Government's role, among others, is:

- To ensure the rule of law
- Create a safe, secure, and fair environment for business
- Make markets where none exist
- Ensure transparency and access to information -and create an efficient and supportive public sector bureaucracy

In exchange, we want the Private Sector to unleash investments in the local economy. We want to see the return of the pioneering drive to create new industries, the entrepreneurial willingness to take risk, and the innovative insight to do things better. I am heartened by the signals coming from the Private Sector. I believe they have got the message about the partnership for growth and job creation. Now is the time for growth.

Partnership with international partners

We are not naïve about the challenges we face regarding our debt and the need to maintain fiscal discipline. This is why we will continue with the principle of joint oversight of our Economic Programme and performance.

We recognize the importance of, and value our relationship with our bilateral and multilateral friends. These relationships have been critical in securing stability. We believe in preserving stability, but we must now build up on this in a productive partnerships with them to the achieve inclusive growth and job creation.

There are many more areas of partnerships that we must formally pursue for national development and as our government is installed over the coming days these will become evident.

The Role of the Prime Minister

In all these partnerships for prosperity, there must be coordinated effort. That is my role. I will ensure that:

- Government is coordinated and strategically directed
- Decisions are taken quickly
- Targets are set
- The nation is informed and that
- Everyone under my appointment is held to account for their action or lack thereof.

Institutional Reform

There is a sense of expectation of change. It is not lost on me that I am the first of the Post-Independence generation to lead Jamaica. More than anything else we want to see Jamaica take its true place as a developed country in the next 50 years. The struggle is not so much political independence as it is economic independence. It is through our economic independence that we secure real political independence.

However, after 53 years of independence, there is need for institutional review of the Jamaican State both in terms of modernization of the institutions of the State, and the structure of the State. Government has to improve its business processes and become more efficient as a regulator and a service provider.

There is need for us to have a say in the fundamental institutions that define Jamaica, the rights we secure for our citizens and how we want Jamaica to be. We will give form to that voice in a referendum to decide on the constitutional matters and social matters.

Independent Jamaica must remove the culture of dependency from our midst. We must teach our children that there is no wealth without work, and no success without sacrifice. We must remove the belief from the psyche of our children that the only way they can step up in life is not by how hard they work, but by who they know.

As Prime Minister I have a duty to align our incentives and reward systems for those who work and follow rules. We must create a Jamaica where the man who plays by the rules is rewarded!

It is important that the citizens of Independent Jamaica have a sense of entitlement to good service from their country. However, increasingly this is not being balanced with a duty of 'giving back'. Jamaica has benefited significantly from the civic pride and sense of nationhood that drove so many to give generously of their talent and treasures to build our great nation.

The spirit still exists, to a great extent, locally and in our Diaspora. However, we have to be more active in promoting civic responsibility, volunteerism and 'giving back', particularly among our youth. And we have to integrate the incredible talents and assets of the Jamaican Diaspora in local development. Too often I hear complaints from the Diaspora that they experience difficulty in giving to Jamaica. Giving should be easy, as part of our Partnership for Prosperity which includes the Diaspora, we will make it easier for you to contribute to the development of your homeland.

Jamaica is too rich in people and talent to be a poor country. With good governance and a prospective outlook, Jamaica, within a decade or less, could emerge as a booming economy and a prosperous society.

Jamaica is geographically central in the Caribbean. My vision is to turn Jamaica into the centre of the Caribbean. A centre of finance, trade and commerce, technology and innovation, and the centre of arts, culture, and lifestyle regionally. This is all possible within our lifetime. Despite any negatives, Jamaica still has a powerful and alluring brand amplifying our voice and influence in the world.

We cannot be satisfied with things as they are. My dream is to fulfill your dream. We must create a Jamaica where there is hope and opportunity. Where we can encourage our children to dream big and be optimistic about their life chances. We must create a Jamaica where our young people can find meaningful work. A Jamaica where you feel safe to live, work and raise your children. A Jamaica that is booming and investors and entrepreneurs can have a confident outlook on the economy. A place where we can retire and truly enjoy as paradise.

All of this is possible. We must start now. Time for a partnership. Time for action!