



## Independence Day Message 8

from Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, ON, MP

6 November 2018

My Jamaican family!

Today our great nation celebrates 56<sup>th</sup> years of political independence.

It is indeed a time to celebrate all that we have achieved with our freedom and independence:

- We boast a stable democracy with over 74 years of elections and uninterrupted change of administrations.
- We rank 6<sup>th</sup> in the World for Free of the Press and Jamaicans generally enjoy great freedom, scoring 77 out of 100 in the Freedom in the world 2018 report.
- We are ranked 47<sup>th</sup> of 113 countries assessed in the Rule of Law index,
- We are ranked highly in sports, music and the creative arts,
- Jamaica is an amplified voice in the international arena, and
- Brand Jamaica continues to be one of the most recognizable brands globally.

However, as we celebrate, we must also cerebrate. Take time to think of the challenges facing us as a Nation, some caused by of our action or inaction.

It must concern to us all, that for a country often romanticized as a “no problem” paradise, violence is becoming part of the narrative surrounding our brand and image. Our independence theme “*One Love...One Family*” aligns with the country’s motto “Out of Many, One People”, and captures our friendly, kind, and compassionate character for which we are renowned. More than this, it gets to the heart of one area of national life in which we have not used our freedom and independence for great advance... and that is the area of the family. Freedom is not free; the cost of freedom and independence is responsibility. The propagation of this sense of responsibility for our freedom starts in the family. It starts with our parents, particularly our fathers, accepting responsibility for their children to create a space in which they can be protected from abuse, cared for, and loved. The family is the training ground for the wider community, where we as a people learn how to peacefully resolve conflicts without the resort to violence. As we reflect on our Independence, let

us all commit to making our families stronger units of the society, where our children are protected, cared for, loved and taught to be responsible individuals and citizens.

Government accountability, efficiency and responsiveness is one area of our independence with which we cannot be satisfied, and each citizen must be eternally vigilant. All Jamaicans are proud of the achievements of Usain Bolt and celebrate; 9.58 seconds over the 100 metres, the fastest man in history. The appeal of Bolt's records is that they were achieved through a meticulous commitment to the process of training and adherence to the highest standard of integrity to the sport. The lesson government can take from the Bolt example, is that it is possible to have a public sector bureaucracy that is true to process and procedure, maintaining the highest standards of accountability and probity, while being efficient and responsive in delivering results. There is no trade-off between bureaucracy and timely outcomes. We must improve the integrity of our public administration to achieve timely outcomes.

Jamaica is ranked overall 70<sup>th</sup> of 190 countries worldwide in The Ease of Doing Business and 98<sup>th</sup> in dealing with building permits, 122<sup>nd</sup> in the ease of paying taxes, 128<sup>th</sup> in the ease of registering property, and 130<sup>th</sup> in the ease of cross border trade. While on the Corruption Prevention Index Jamaica is ranked 68<sup>th</sup> of 180 countries.

Let us exercise our sovereign will, our independence to build a Public Sector that is fast but integrous like Usain Bolt. It is admittedly a complex issue but not an impossible task, already, Jamaica is ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the ease of starting a business. It can be done. My administration is committed to increasing efficiency through public transformation and building a strong governance framework strengthened by mechanisms to eliminate corruption.

The challenge for the next 50 years, is to use our political independence and social freedom to achieve economic independence and prosperity. Jamaica, based on 2017 IMF data, is ranked around 110<sup>th</sup> of 187 countries in terms of GDP per capita and we are within the top 20 most indebted countries in the world. Our economic position will not change overnight, but we are making steady progress, with surefooted policies, careful not to waste the precious social consensus that has been built around debt management and fiscal discipline and frugality. Already we can see the signs of progress. The country's credit rating has been upgraded to a positive outlook. We are on track to push our debt to GDP ratio to just below 100% this fiscal year and we remain on course to reach 60% debt to GDP by fiscal year 25/26. Recently we repaid \$58 billion dollars of debt and only needed to borrow back 10 billion of that from the market and at phenomenally low interest rates in local currency. Other economic fundamentals are pointing in the right direction, our unemployment rate continues to decline, inflation is low, interest rates are low, and most important poverty is falling. This combined with a carefully developed capital expenditure plan to modernize Jamaica's road network and urban infrastructure will create the conditions for the Jamaican economy to take off.

Our beloved island Jamaica is considerably blessed with naturally talented, and tremendously innovative people. We have enriched the world with music and art, however, we must expand our creativity and innovativeness into other fields. The world is now in the fourth industrial revolution and we cannot afford to be once again left behind. Today's economies are all about innovation, embedding technology in daily life. Jamaica ranks 81<sup>st</sup> on the 2018 Global Innovation Index of 126 countries. This government is serious about creating an innovation society, not only in the creative arts but equally in science and technology. This will require changing the education system from the base up. Replacing GSAT with the PEP will promote more critical thinking and problem-solving skills and increasing the number of years of attachment to schools will ensure students acquire and develop greater knowledge and skills for the innovation economy.

We don't need a global ranking index to tell us that we are not keeping our environment and surrounding protected and as clean as I know we can. Yes, we are free and independent people, but it doesn't mean we are free to throw our plastic bottles through the car window or to parachute our waste into our gullies and waterways. While the Government is taking steps to radically transform waste management in Jamaica, if every household was responsible in the disposal of

their waste our country would be much cleaner. Our environmental health and public sanitation are a family matter. Cleanliness starts at home. I urge all Jamaican families this independence to consider separating your waste, reuse and recycle. Our families must love and protect our environment as a legacy for our children.

So, as we celebrate and cerebrate our independence, let us remember that we are one Jamaican Family, striving for peace, integrity, creativity, sustainability and prosperity. And we do this with one love, one heart, giving thanks and praise to the Lord. Let's get together this independence and make it alright.

One love my brothers and sisters! Happy 56<sup>th</sup> Independence!

God bless Jamaica!