

# **Independence Message 2008**

**By Prime Minister**

**The Hon. Bruce Golding, MP**

**6 August 2008**

It has been 46 years since we gained independence - 46 years since we proudly took our place among the nations of the world.

We are a small nation when compared to the rest of the world but, in so many ways, in so many areas of endeavour, we have caused the world to sit up and take notice of us.

Our culture, music, scholars, sportsmen and sportswomen have earned us international recognition and admiration. Right now, we are looking forward to the Jamaican flag flying high as our athletes prepare themselves for the Olympics in Beijing.

It is all a measure of our capacity for greatness, a testimony to the creativity that is within us, an indication of our enormous potential as a people.

It is what inspired the dream and hope of independence that our nation would flourish, that out of many we would live as one people with equal opportunity for all, that we would build prosperity so that our people would enjoy a better life.

We were never unmindful of the challenges we faced. Hardships there, indeed, were but the land was green and the sun was shining.

These 46 years have produced varied results. There have been successes and failures, positive achievements and disappointing setbacks. We must take time to take stock of ourselves. We must resolve to build on the achievements we have made and to make up ground where we have fallen behind....for the dream and hope that inspired us at independence, must never die.

When we embarked on independence in 1962, we did so with confidence in ourselves that we could manage our own affairs and guide our own destiny. We launched out on our own but we never felt we were alone for we looked to the world to help us grow and become strong.

That world has changed. Even though it increasingly recognizes its inter-dependence, much of its goodwill has given way to fierce market competition. Economics, not politics, is what now defines international relations.

We, too, have changed. We are no longer an infant nation; we are 46 years on and we must accept full responsibility for ourselves, our state of affairs and the condition and well-being of our people. The difficulties Jamaica has experienced this year as a result of crises in the global economy is a harsh reminder of that reality.

The world has never before seen such sharp increases in the prices of basic commodities. Its effect on Jamaica, especially on the poor, has been severe. Yet, we have managed to weather the storm. There are hopeful signs that the worst may have passed and we look to the future with hope, for the dream of independence is still alive.

So, as we celebrate our independence, let us recommit ourselves to the fulfillment of that dream. Let us remind ourselves of the hope given to us by our founding fathers, Alexander Bustamante and Norman Manley when they spoke to us on Independence Day 1962. Bustamante charged us to “build a Jamaica which will last and of which we and generations to come, will be proud”.

Norman Manley exhorted us to “make our small country a safe and happy home for all our people”.

They pointed the way; they set us on our journey. We have much farther to go but we have been well prepared and we know the way.

A happy independence to all Jamaicans at home and abroad.