

Independence Day Message 2018

from the Leader of the Opposition

Dr. the Hon. Peter Philips, MP

6 August 2018

My fellow Jamaicans,

As we celebrate the 56th anniversary of our Independence, we can all take pride in Jamaica's achievements.

Our scholars, professionals, artists, athletes, workers, farmers, business people and many others have all contributed to the prestige that Jamaica has enjoyed in the international community and our dynamic presence on the global cultural scene is world-renown.

At another level, we remain one of the few nations which has throughout our history, as an independent nation, has maintained a stable parliamentary democracy and changed administrations peacefully by our electoral process.

However, even as we celebrate our achievements, we should be aware of the challenges that still persist and which require urgent and collective action.

We need new and more creative policies and programmes to place Jamaica firmly on the path of equitable and inclusive economic growth and to give Jamaicans a bigger say in the ownership and control of the economy. Sadly, in many areas of our economy, for example in tourism and also in construction, Jamaican managers and workers are being pushed to the margins.

We must replace the unequal system of educational apartheid which leaves the majority of our children trapped in sub-standard schools without adequate preparation for the world of work or the opportunity to develop their personal talents.

We must take the action required to bring an end to the situation where over 700,000 Jamaicans are still squatters in the land of their birth. Everyone deserves the opportunity to own a piece of this rock!

Too many Jamaicans still live pay-day to pay-day, under the stress of low wages as prices continue to rise. We need a massive expansion of small and medium sized businesses to grow a vibrant Jamaican economy, with Jamaicans running successful enterprises and employees earning a decent living and their workers' rights protected.

Today, there is still too much corruption, too much waste of tax-payer's resources, and too many breaches of public trust by people in positions of power.

So even as we embrace Independence as a time for celebration, let us also see it as a time for a renewal of the national spirit. Let us commit ourselves to building a Jamaica not just for a few, but to building a Jamaica that works for all its people, by the radical transformation of the economy and society.

Let us also use this period to recommit to the moral principles and standards of integrity which guided the founders of our nations. Doing this will renew our faith in the nation-building project that our forefathers and foremothers embarked on 56 years ago.

So, as we all look forward to showcasing the best of our culture and artistes, and to welcoming Jamaicans and friends from abroad to join in the celebrations, we must also use the opportunity to reflect on our country's journey thus far. Together we can chart a course to uplift:

- * All those who have been left behind
- * To steadfastly focus on opportunities to enable young people to create independent lives, and
- * To help those who struggle for survival on the margins of society.

We can create a Jamaica that works for all!

May God bless Jamaica, and grant success to our efforts to build stronger families, harmonious communities – a better Jamaica which offers progress for all our people.

Have a happy and safe Independence Day.