



## **Inaugural Address**

**by**

**The Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, MP**

**Prime Minister of Jamaica**

**5 January 2012**

My fellow Jamaicans, I am thankful to God for guidance and strength; and to you the people of Jamaica for the faith and trust that you have placed in me and my team. I am deeply humbled that, once again, you have chosen me to lead our nation as it stands at a crossroads.

The Team, which I am privileged to lead, is just as conscious as I am of the difficult times that confront us on our journey.

In our political history, it is a rare opportunity to be given a second chance to lead. It is also a sobering experience. But, I have been strengthened by the experience of going through the first phase of the journey. And, I have emerged like the steel in "It Takes A Mighty Fire" which H. D. Carberry, our Jamaican poet, wrote about in his poems of discovery and self-awareness. And, after being tested and tempered, I stand before you, today, a stronger and better person, who is prepared to be of service to my country and people.

I know that we face an awesome task. There is greater debt, increased poverty levels, tighter fiscal space.

My administration will not engage in a blame-game. We will present the facts to the Jamaican people, based on rigorous analysis. Our approach must be to right the wrongs and insist on accountability. Let us learn from our past, absorb the lessons and go forward. We only need to look back to confirm where we are coming from, and to correct our errors and weaknesses as we look to the future. That is the way of progress.

The mandate which Jamaicans gave the People's National Party on December 29 is a call to action. It is a signal from our people that we, the government, must earn their trust. It also gives us the opportunity to ease the burdens and the pressures of increasing poverty, joblessness and a deteriorating standard of living.

The mandate is a cry for us to restore hope.

The mandate calls on us to protect the good name of Jamaica, at home and in the eyes of the international community. Jamaica must remain for all, a “quality brand,” which gives citizens, from all walks of life, the opportunity to achieve their goals.

The Jamaican people have sent a clear message. They want a more accountable and transparent government which consults them; and, they should expect nothing less.

On my watch, I pledge that the rule of law will be paramount; and we will serve with humility.

On my watch, I pledge that we will honour the faith and trust of the Jamaican people.

On my watch, I pledge that we will reject governmental extravagance and be vigilant in eliminating corruption.

My fellow Jamaicans, the first order of business for the members of the Leadership Team will be to inform ourselves about the true state of the Jamaican economy.

Then we must act.

We remain committed to a vibrant partnership with all critical stakeholders; local private sector; the public sector—civil servants who play a pivotal role in nation building; our

international partners; and, in particular, with the International Monetary Fund, as we identify the basis for a new Agreement.

Our policies are based on the principle that the private sector is a major participant in shaping the economy of our country. However, in a time of crisis, government must act to stimulate growth and to restore confidence in the country's ability to pay its way. Hence, in the short and medium term, we will use state resources to stimulate employment through the Jamaica Emergency Employment Programme (JEEP). We will do so in a transparent and non-partisan manner, to improve critical areas, such as the infrastructure and the environment, which support economic growth.

Let me say emphatically to our business community, at home and overseas...we will pursue a tight fiscal policy, reduce our debt to GDP ratio, maintain the key macro-economic fundamentals; and be very careful and prudent in our debt management.

We will do all of this while seeking to improve the social conditions of our people, including a serious reduction of the chronic state of unemployment in this country, particularly among our young people.

I also assure you that we will work with anyone who is prepared to work in Jamaica's interest and who shares our vision that people must be at the centre of our development.

Our investors, including foreign direct investors, must contribute to making Jamaica a truly competitive economy. Now, more than ever, we must also make it easier to do business in Jamaica. Investors demand no less, and our future social and economic prospects depend on it.

Our Administration will be marked by greater Openness in Government and frankness in our relations with the global community. This candidness will also be seen in the meetings of Parliamentary Committees, which Members of the Opposition will continue to chair; and, to which the media and the public will have full access.

This government will also broaden and deepen our input into the Regional Integration Movement. We will restore the vibrant and vigorous participation of our country. Previous PNP Administrations have given quality time and expertise to this Regional Integration Movement.

One important agenda item will be to establish the Caribbean Court of Justice in its final appellate jurisdiction; and in this way, end judicial surveillance from London. We must fully repatriate our sovereignty. And, in going forward, we invite the Opposition to follow through on the statements which it recently made that we were “not far apart” in our respective positions. Let us, together, complete this aspect of Regional Integration within the life of this Administration.

My fellow Jamaicans...it is time for us to build a gentler, more respectful and responsible society. My Administration will be marked by respect and responsibility. The Jamaican people have elected us to lead, and we will lead. We will take responsibility for the society and we will be responsible to the society. I urge all Jamaicans to become more respectful of ourselves, more respectful of each other, more respectful of our senior citizens, more respectful of persons with disabilities, and more respectful of our national symbols and national institutions.

We will seek to earn your respect by how we conduct ourselves and the nation’s business.

We will strive for more civil and respectful behaviour in our Parliament.

As we continue on this journey, we will seek to make this country a nation of brothers and sisters, not one of rivals and victims.

This Administration will extend the hand of participation to everyone, who wishes to play a role in our development. Jamaicans in the Diaspora will be given every opportunity to contribute and to be respected equally as Jamaicans at home.

As we journey together, I call on all Jamaicans to take responsibility for our lives. Be the best student you can be; the best parent; the best teacher; doctor or nurse; politician, public servant or private business person; athlete or entertainer; designer, dressmaker, hairdresser or barber; and strive to improve ourselves by reinvesting in our personal development.

That is how people ultimately make progress. This government can provide the context and the opportunity. That is the partnership I want.

Partnership between the government and the people is not a matter of choice but an absolute necessity. This is critical if we are to extend our already world renowned power to true national, economic and social triumph. Absolutely nothing can make our magnificent country fail if we all put aside our differences and strive for our ultimate goals.

As we continue our journey, this is the Jubilee Year of Jamaican Independence. This 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year will be a time for reflection on the lessons of the past; and, as we celebrate our achievements as an independent nation, we now need to complete the circle of independence. In this regard, we will, therefore, initiate the process for our detachment from the Monarchy to become a Republic with our own indigenous President, as Head of State.

Year 2012 is also an Olympic Year, and our athletes are already poised to make us proud again, in this international arena. This mandate, therefore, presents a unique opportunity for us to unite and work together as one people, and take full advantage of the prospects that will emerge...as we invite the rest of the world to "Meet Jamaica" in London in July and August.

My fellow Jamaicans, those who have gone before blazed a trail of success, and passed the baton to us. We are all conscious of the achievements of our National Heroes and Heroines, former leaders and the thousands of other Jamaicans who have played their part.

We are the proud beneficiaries and successors of their legacy.

Today we embark upon a new phase of our Jamaican journey. In the 'Global Trade Winds' of change we are not always at liberty to direct these winds but we must set our sails to pilot the Good Ship Jamaica through these turbulent economic waters to safe harbour.

In the face of these dramatic winds of change, I am calling for all hands on deck. This nation requires the strength, the creativity, the innovation and the steely courage of every Jamaican man, woman, youth and child to place this vessel on a path to prosperity.

Today, I invite you to hold my hands, as I hold yours. Today, I invite you to hold your neighbours' hands. Let us form a strong bond of patriotic unity and let us move forward together on this journey into our collective future.

I believe that today marks a critical turning point in our journey. You must believe this with me and you must play your part in this process of transformation.

"It is shining time again." It is our time to shine. The challenges will not disappear overnight, but together we can overcome and we shall rise and we shall shine.

I begin this leg of our journey with an unfaltering belief in my people. I invite you to join me in this confidence in ourselves. Together, we shall rise and together with the guiding hand of the Almighty, we will succeed.

May God bless Jamaica. May God bless us all.

Thank you.