

## Address

by the Honourable Arnaldo Brown M.P., Minister of State in the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica

At the Jamaica Diaspora Health Forum Canada, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2014

on

***“Paths to Economic Growth, Diversification and Prosperity in  
Jamaica: An Optimistic Future via International Partnerships in  
Health, Education, Technology and Industry”***

---

### Salutations

Honourable Luther Buchanan M.P., Minister of State in the Office of  
the Prime Minister

Her Excellency Sheila Sealey-Monteith High Commissioner for  
Jamaica

Mr. Seth George Ramocan, Consul General of Jamaica

Professor Earl Jarrett, Chairman, Diaspora Foundation Limited

Professor Neville Ying, Executive Director of the Jamaica Diaspora  
Institute

Dr. Barry McLellan, President and Chief Executive Officer of  
Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

Other Members of the Jamaican Delegation

Other Distinguished Guests,

Fellow Jamaicans & Friends of Jamaica,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon.

It is with great pleasure that I have accepted the invitation to address this gathering this afternoon. I have been asked to speak on, dare I say, a most visionary topic: **“Paths to Economic Growth, Diversification and Prosperity in Jamaica: An Optimistic Future via International Partnerships in Health, Education, Technology and Industry”**. However, before I make any pronouncements, I feel that it is necessary for me to briefly define a few of the key concepts in

this theme, particularly as it relates to our own approach to these concepts.

‘Economy’ refers to the “the wealth and resources of a community”. While ‘growth’ may be defined as: “an increase in size or value.” Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, the term ‘economic growth’ is the increase in size or value of the wealth and resources of a community. For the purposes of this speech, the community to which I will be referring is Jamaica.

‘Economic diversification’, is the process by which a growing range of economic outputs is produced. It can also refer to the diversification, variation or modification of markets for exports.

Finally, ‘prosperity’ is a state of success or wealth.

In short Ladies and Gentlemen, I will be providing you with an update on how the Government of Jamaica is, has been and will be

engaging our international partners, as it seeks to introduce variety into the current domestic market. This is with a view to bring Jamaica and its people closer to a state of success and wealth, while ensuring that all projects undertaken for the benefit of our nation are done in a sustainable manner.

This kind of sustainable economic development and growth will not only involve the development of a plan of action to bring Jamaica to a visible state of economic maturity, while remaining cognizant of the need to preserve our natural environment and resources for future generations of Jamaicans.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Government of Jamaica is aware that the current domestic economic situation is of major concern to many of you here. Please rest assured that we are not ignorant of the burden being borne by all, including the poorest in the nation and their inevitable feelings of despair as a result of this. We are thankful that

the Jamaican family, both at home and abroad has remained a caring one during these trying times.

We must, however, remain steadfast on a course of macroeconomic transformation by adopting the necessary measures and living within our means as a nation. A significant part of this process will be the reduction of the national debt, as well as our trade and fiscal deficits. It is no secret that Jamaica's best asset is its people and we must continue to work towards agreed goals, by putting our collective energies together in an organized manner through appropriately designed mechanisms.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am sure that, many of you have heard references to the National Development Plan: Vision 2030. This plan outlines Jamaica's four (4) main development goals, the fulfilment of which, it is hoped, will lead to the country achieving developed country status by the year 2030, as follows:

- 1) Jamaicans are empowered to achieve their fullest potential;**
- 2) The Jamaican society is secure, cohesive and just;**
- 3) Jamaica has a healthy natural environment; and most importantly**
- 4) Jamaica's economy is prosperous**

In its bid to achieve developed country status by the year 2030, the Government of Jamaica has formulated a National Growth and Investment Strategy, in which it has identified key priority areas for Jamaica's Medium Term Socio –Economic path; they include:

- 1. The Global Logistics Hub;**
- 2. The Development of Agro and ICT Parks;**
- 3. The Development of Downtown Kingston, Caymanas Estates and North Coast Towns;**
- 4. Health and Wellness Tourism; and**
- 5. Creative Industries and Sports**

It is hoped that the diversification of the current domestic economy through strategic investments in the aforementioned prospective growth areas, instead of focusing on the traditional sectors of agriculture, tourism and mining, will lead to real economic growth and realization of the developmental goals set out under Vision 2030.

In tandem with the aforementioned key growth areas, the Government of Jamaica has further identified five (5) strategic priorities which will be critical to making the dream for the future of our nation a reality in the medium term, including:

- **Job creation;**
- **Improved safety and security;**
- **Human capital development;**
- **Social inclusion; and**
- **Fiscal prudence and the pursuit of a credible economic programme**

The Government of Jamaica is mindful that it cannot achieve developed country status on its own, and as such, has turned its focus to strengthening ties with our international partners, both traditional and non-traditional.

Friends, traditionally, when one mentions international partners, one's mind tends to automatically go to well-known bilateral trade and investment partners such as Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain and China, due to the large amounts of foreign direct investment flows from these countries, as well as to multilateral lending agencies such as, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank.

While collaboration with these partners has yielded tangible results for the Government and people of Jamaica, ranging from job creation to renewed assurance in the Jamaican economy at the international level, the contributions of and potential contributions

of non-traditional partners to the development of the Jamaican economy cannot be discounted.

The Government of Jamaica has benefitted significantly from non-traditional partners, including: individual investors, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Multi-National Corporations (MNCs). For instance, all three (3) major telecommunications network: Digicel, Flow and Lime, are investing substantial amounts of money on infrastructure, in order to benefit from Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) opportunities emanating from the Logistics Hub. Digicel is investing US\$80 million on infrastructure, while LIME is investing \$8.7 billion to deploy a cutting-edge 4G Mobile network.

Although Diasporas are recognized internationally as the most reliable source of financing especially through remittances, they are regarded as a non-traditional source for trade and investment. In fact, international remittance figures for the year 2012 exceeded

USD 530 billion, three times the figure of global aid budgets. I am pleased to say that Jamaica is blessed to have an invaluable resource in our extended family in the Diaspora, which has been estimated at three (3) million persons.

The socio-economic contributions of the Jamaican community overseas to the local health, education, technology and industry sectors, has had a tremendous impact on the development of the Jamaican society over the years. The Government of Jamaica believes that this group can play a strategic role in the development of Jamaica, similar to that which is played by the Jewish, Indian and Chinese Diasporas.

Friends, I must express thanks on behalf of the Government and the people of Jamaica, to many of you, who continue to give back to Jamaica in various ways, not just in cash, but in the form of your time, skills, knowledge or kind, as these resources or social remittances go a far way in meeting the needs of many Jamaicans.

One of the key areas of Diaspora contribution to Jamaica is health missions and the donation of valuable equipment to hospitals and other healthcare facilities by Diaspora bodies such as the Jamaica Diaspora Canada Foundation (JDCF). I must acknowledge the ground breaking Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the Ministry of Health and the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, for the provision of assistance and medication to Jamaica.

The majority of these missions are conducted by volunteer organizations, while individuals, groups and associations contribute equipment. For the period January to July 2013 alone, contributions in kind from the major Diaspora centres of Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom were valued at approximately Seventeen Million One Hundred and Thirty-Nine Thousand, Three Hundred and Fifty Jamaican Dollars (J\$17,139,350).

In addition to the foregoing, there were One Hundred and Ninety-Seven (197) Medical Missions to Jamaica which focused on eye-care, medical and dental health.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Diaspora has made a firm commitment to the field of health and in this regard, has pledged to donate One Thousand (1,000) blood pressure machines to the Jamaican health sector. To date, Three Hundred (300) of these machines have been purchased and delivered to the appropriate authorities.

Other projects and initiatives in health include: knowledge transfer in the form of workshops conducted by members of the Diaspora in the medical field, donations of textbooks to nursing schools in Jamaica, the implementation of e-consultancy systems and partnerships between Jamaican hospitals and those in countries, such as Canada with assistance from the Diaspora.

I therefore invite all of you here tonight to partner with your fellow Diaspora members in assisting the Government of Jamaica in its bid to deliver world class healthcare to all Jamaicans, by leveraging resources available in the Diaspora to meet critical needs in the Jamaican Health Sector.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Government of Jamaica is aware of the deep connection that many Diaspora members have with their alma maters and schools in the communities from which they or their families originate. In this regard, it is to be noted that Alumni Associations have made significant contributions to all levels of educational institutions, from the early-childhood to the tertiary level, while a number of Diaspora members employed in the sector have assisted with knowledge transfer, by visiting schools at all levels of the education spectrum to provide physical and material support.

Numerous Homecoming groups and Community Based Organisations have also been responsible for the development of and major renovations to educational institutions in their respective parishes. In light of this, the Government is actively seeking to facilitate these interests, by aligning government projects and processes to give greater utility and organization to Diaspora based educational initiatives.

In February 2014, the Jamaican Diaspora Education Taskforce partnered with a number of stakeholders including the Ministry of Education, the Jamaica Teachers Association, Joint Board of Teacher Education, Early Childhood Commission and the National Parent Teacher Association of Jamaica to convene an Education Summit which was held under the theme: ***“Advancing Education Initiative: A Strategic Alliance with the Diaspora”***.

The main objectives of the Summit were: to discuss ways to improve education in Jamaica; understand the goals of each organization that advocates for education; identify their projects; determine any overlap or duplication; recognize gaps, and leverage past successes in the field. In addition to building on the philanthropic contributions of the Diaspora to Education, the Task Force used the Education Summit as a fact-finding mission which would enable the Diaspora to develop a 6-Year Plan of support for the transformation of the Jamaican education sector.

Educators and representatives from various alumni and Diaspora organisations from across the USA, Canada and the UK, in addition to local principals, teachers, administrators, counsellors, student council executives, members of parent-teachers associations, and representatives from the Ministry of Education, participated in this Summit.

I therefore urge you to consider giving back to your respective alma maters whether in cash or kind, as the Government strives to provide quality education for future generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am sure that if many of you here were asked to state the most obvious way in which partnership with the Diaspora benefits the ordinary Jamaican, many of you would have stated cash in the form of remittances. However, as I have outlined, there is much that can be achieved through social remittances and philanthropy.

This is not to discount the impact of monetary remittances, as many Jamaicans rely on these sums of money to meet their daily expenses, and even though remittances are personal in nature, they contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country.

In 2013 alone, remittances from Jamaicans living overseas amounted to over Two Billion United States Dollars (USD 2 billion), which is approximately thirteen per cent (13%) of the Jamaican Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is illustrative of how critical these funds are to the country's economy and its Net International Reserves (NIR).

However, this form of monetary remittance, Ladies and gentlemen, is just one aspect of the partnership between the members of the Diaspora and Jamaica. In this case the proceeds serve to benefit family members on a personal level. Notwithstanding, the Government in recognition of the Diaspora contribution has put in place wide ranging mechanisms over the years to deepen and strengthen the relationship with the Jamaican Community Overseas.

These include, Returning Residents Programme, Return of Qualified Jamaicans for National Development, Biennial Conferences, Jamaican Diaspora Foundation, Jamaican Diaspora Institute, Joint Select Committee and Diaspora and Consular Affairs Department in the Ministry to anchor the process of engagement.

It has also been widely recognized that the return of migrants with different skill levels can contribute substantially to development through brain gain, technology transfer, investment and trade and human resource development. This holds true in the case of Jamaica, whether the return Diaspora members is permanent or temporary, voluntary or involuntary.

In fact, between 1994 and 1998, Jamaica successfully implemented the Return and Re-integration Programme of Qualified Jamaican Nationals, which encouraged qualified migrants to return and offered financial incentives to members of the Diaspora in specific sectors and occupations.

Friends, the Government of Jamaica is cognizant that in order to take advantage of the opportunities that exist in the field of technology, it will be necessary for the country to produce highly trained personnel, capable of implementing, through training, the knowledge that is transferred by members of the Diaspora at international standards. Technology is also an important tool which the Government of Jamaica can use to engage youths in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and subsequent generations of the Jamaican Diaspora.

Also of note, are increasing investments in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Science and Technology sectors, as well as evidence of growth in the agricultural, tourism, construction, mining and quarrying sectors of the economy. The Neutraceutical and Logistics industries have also been subject to renewed interest in recent times, the latter as a result of the planned Global Logistics Hub.

These are, indeed, interesting times and Jamaica is about to launch into a new phase of expansion in business and investment in the designated priority areas. I am therefore encouraging all Jamaicans to examine existing opportunities and get involved where it is feasible to do so.

In its bid to increase its engagement of the Jamaican Diaspora, a number of initiatives have been undertaken by the Government of Jamaica, including the ongoing development of a number of policies geared towards enhancing the participation of the Jamaican Diaspora in various aspects of national development.

This, Ladies and Gentlemen, is in line with the significant growth in international discourse pertaining to the increasing impact of migration, as evidenced in the United Nations focus on Migration and Development.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I will take this opportunity to outline the other avenues which are being explored by the Government of Jamaica, including policies and a number of other initiatives which are to be executed using a joined-up government approach, in line with the National Development Plan: Vision 2030.

Friends, the Diaspora is high on the Government's policy agenda, and in this regard, three major policies are being developed with the Diaspora in mind. They are as follows:

- **a Diaspora Policy;**
- **a National Migration and Development Policy; and**
- **a Foreign Trade Policy**

All of these are currently in draft stage.

The Diaspora Policy, recognizes the tremendous potential which the Jamaican Diaspora could play in national economic transformation. This policy prescribes methods of increasing trade and investment linkages between Jamaica and the Diaspora, as one

of the key elements in achieving national development goals. It is projected that this document will be finalised in time for the 2015 Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference where it will be presented.

The major aims of the Diaspora Policy are to:

- Define the role and importance of the Jamaican Diaspora in national development;
- Establish appropriate governance systems, mechanism and processes to facilitate engagement between Jamaican and its Diaspora, and among the Diaspora;
- Underline the importance of the active participation of the Diaspora in their host countries on issues of importance to both those countries and Jamaica;

- Promote the involvement of the Jamaican Diaspora in enhancing Jamaica's culture, image and profile in the world;
- Promote cultural connectivity and linkages, and a sense of identity among persons of Jamaican descent, especially 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> generations; and
- Facilitate formation of partnerships among the Diaspora and private sector, civil society and other organisations in order to deepen the engagement process.

The Policy Issues which will be addressed by the Diaspora Policy include:

- **Information, Data Collection and Dissemination;**
- **Communication;**
- **Socio-economic Advancement and Welfare;**
- **Governance;**
- **Diaspora Youths, 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation and Beyond;**

- **Safety, Security and the Diaspora; and**
- **Corporate and Individual Philanthropy**

The Diaspora Policy will also create a dual framework for partnership with members of the Diaspora, whereby: (i) Members of the Diaspora can contribute to Jamaica's sustainable development and (ii) The Government of Jamaica can provide support to the Diaspora in addressing social and economic issues where they reside. In order to achieve these objectives, the Government will work in collaboration with key partners to develop win-win strategies for all parties.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the creation of a friendly business environment for entrepreneurs is also very high on the Government's agenda. Chief among the initiatives being undertaken by the Government of Jamaica, in this regard, are:

**1. The Enterprise Jamaica Project which was recently launched.**

**This initiative is in line with the new MSME Policy which was approved by Parliament last year; and**

**2. The JAMPRO Export Max Programme, which assists small businesses to expand exports.**

It is also to be noted that, last year, the National Export-Import Bank of Jamaica (EXIM Bank) saw its highest levels of lending since its establishment in 1986, a total of 28 years ago.

Yet another initiative which is being undertaken, is the ***Jamaica Global Business Connect Action Plan***. In March 2013, the Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO), in recognition of the diversity of the involvement of the Diaspora in Jamaica, devised this strategy, which is aimed at leveraging the talents and resources of Jamaicans in the Diaspora and their descendants, as well as other groups which have a strong affinity to Jamaica, in an effort to increase investment and trade in the country.

The Jamaica Global Business Connect Strategy is comprised of three

(3) main components:

**1) The formation of the Global Business Connect Advisory Council;**

**2) The establishment of Business Networks; and**

**3) The execution of Diaspora-focused Promotions**

Ladies and Gentlemen, these are some of the various areas in which Jamaicans in the Diaspora and Friends of Jamaica can make a significant impact and take advantage of real business opportunities.

The most recent initiative which has been developed with a view towards deepening Diaspora engagement is the Mapping

Jamaica's Diaspora Project. This eighteen (18) month project is being funded and supported by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

The aim of the Mapping Exercise is to determine through the flexibility of an online survey, the location, interests, skills and expertise of members of the global Jamaican Diaspora. This structured approach will gauge their interest in key areas for growth, including: **Logistics, Agriculture; Manufacturing, Information and Communications Technology, Creative Industries, Energy and Mining and Health and Wellness Tourism**, and provide members of the Diaspora with greater opportunities for employment, investment and trade in these and other sectors of the Jamaican economy.

With the collation of information garnered from the survey, it is hoped that the Government of Jamaica will be in a better position to identify the gaps which currently exist in its engagement of Jamaicans in the Diaspora, ranging from the first to fourth and

subsequent generations, as it will also provide a tool to match skills in the Diaspora with gaps that exist in Jamaica.

The end result of the Mapping Project will be the creation of a database of Jamaicans worldwide who are interested in contributing to the nation's development through social investment and financial investments. The personal information contained in this database be held in strictest confidence and will be managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica. Friends, I urge you to give this initiative your full support.

Last, but by no means least, Ladies and Gentlemen, are the Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conferences which began in 2004. A total of five (5) Conferences have been held thus far. These Conferences serve as a vehicle to address issues of concern to the Diaspora and provide a forum for the Government to espouse its position on a number of policy areas

The most recent of these Conferences was held in June 2013, in Montego Bay under the theme ***“A Nation on a Mission: Jamaica-Diaspora Partnership for Development”***. The Conference placed emphasis on the areas of business, trade and investment, as well as philanthropy, social investment and Diaspora diplomacy. Over Fifteen Hundred (1500) persons were in attendance. Among those present, were delegations from the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, and from locations as far flung as Malawi and the United Arab Emirates.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my pleasure to report that, from all indications, last year’s Conference was a tremendous success. It is my hope that next years Conference will be even more successful and I urge you all to encourage all members of the Canadian-Jamaican Diaspora to attend the 6<sup>th</sup> Biennial Diaspora Conference, which is scheduled to take place at the Montego Bay Convention Centre from 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015, particularly those with interests in the Government of Jamaica’s key growth areas.

The main theme for the 2015 Conference is **“Jamaica and the Diaspora: Linking for Growth and Prosperity”**. It is hoped that this theme will serve to rally Jamaicans and in the Diaspora to build on existing partnerships with a view to reaping mutual benefits.

There will be two (2) major focal areas:

- 1) Investment and Trade; and**
- 2) Social Services**

A secondary theme has been proposed in light of the aforementioned areas of focus:

***“Harmonizing Diaspora Skills, Expertise and Investment with Business and Social Development”***.

The following key issues will be discussed during the course of the Conference:

- Investment Opportunities and Business Climate**
- Diaspora Skills and Investment for Economic Growth Priorities**

- **Diaspora Support in Educational Transformation**
- **Strategic Support for improving Health Care**
- **Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)**
- **Investment in Tourism Infrastructure Development with emphasis on Sports and Health Tourism**

Ladies and Gentlemen, an Inaugural International Symposium on Immigration and Deportation will be held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015, the designated Day of Service for the Conference. This Symposium, which will take the form of legal workshops, was conceptualized as a result of the increasing challenges being faced by the global Jamaican Diaspora in the areas of Immigration and Deportation. It is the intention of the Government of Jamaica to have the workshops carried out during the Symposium accredited for the benefit of members of the legal profession.

Friends, let me close by leaving you with the theme of the Mapping Jamaica's Diaspora Project: ***“Linking Jamaicans Globally for***

***Growth and Prosperity***". I am sure you will all agree with me when I say that if the Government of Jamaica stays the current course which it has charted with a view to further engaging the Diaspora, Jamaica and its people, both at home and abroad, have a very promising future. One filled with the promise of economic growth, diversification and prosperity through collaboration with the Diaspora, Friends of Jamaica and other partners.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you.

*Diaspora and Consular Affairs Department*  
*08<sup>th</sup> July 2014*