

MESSAGE

**Arnaldo Brown, M.P.
Minister of State
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade
on the occasion of the
Jamaican Diaspora Health Forum Canada**

I take this opportunity to extend congratulations, on behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, to the Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation (JDCF) for hosting the Diaspora Health Forum during the period 9th – 12th July 2014. The Forum, which is a collaborative effort of the members of the Diaspora in the United States of America, United Kingdom and Canada, will bring together experts in the field to focus on sustainable partnerships in health care, and mechanisms to leverage resources to meet critical needs in the health sector in Jamaica.

It must be recalled that the Diaspora Health Forum emanated from the Fourth Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference held in Ocho Rios in 2011. Stemming from that Conference, a fact finding team was formed with a view to assessing the needs of the sector. Subsequently, a preliminary analysis was conducted which laid the basis for a more structured approach to the Diaspora's involvement in health initiatives. In addition to medical missions, the Diaspora has committed to providing 1,000 blood pressure machines of which 300 have been delivered.

Yet another milestone is the signing of two Memoranda of Understanding between the Government of Jamaica and Sunnybrook Health Services, as well as Sick Kids Hospital, both located in Toronto, Canada. These agreements will focus on capacity-building in the areas of medical and health information technologies, human resource training and education, and health care infrastructure development. These partnerships will assist the Government in providing a healthcare system which is accessible, affordable, well equipped and fully staffed with highly trained personnel.

For its part, the Government of Jamaica has undertaken a number of measures to facilitate the Diaspora's engagement in the health sector through the strengthening of the International Cooperation Unit in the Ministry of Health; establishment of an Advisory Body on Diaspora Affairs at that Ministry to streamline medical missions to Jamaica, and the appointment of liaison officers in all public hospitals

across Jamaica. These mechanisms will further deepen the Diaspora-Homeland partnerships to achieve the goal of sustained development of our country and, in particular, the Vision 2030 outcome of “*a healthy and stable population*”.

I must also indicate that the Government is working assiduously on a number of initiatives to bolster the Diaspora Movement globally, including the formulation of a Diaspora Policy and the implementation of a Diaspora Mapping Exercise. The Diaspora Policy will establish a structure for further collaboration with the Diaspora and to support Jamaicans overseas in their efforts to address socio-economic issues in their respective locations. The Mapping Exercise, on the other hand, will take the form of an online survey geared at identifying the skills, location and interests of Jamaicans resident abroad. Following the collation of information garnered from the survey, it is expected that the Government will be in a more informed position to identify the gaps which exist in the engagement of Jamaicans in the Diaspora. I encourage all Jamaican-Canadians to complete the survey by logging on to the website www.mapj diaspora.iom.int .

Plans are well advanced for the convening of the Sixth Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference, to be held from the 14th – 18th June 2015 in Montego Bay. With respect to the field of health, the Conference will address how the Diaspora can be more integrally involved in the transformation of the sector through investment in infrastructure development, professional services, donations of equipment and pharmaceutical supplies, among other areas. A new feature of the Conference is the staging of an International Immigration Symposium which will deal with many of the challenges faced by our countrymen in the USA, UK, Canada and other locations. It is anticipated that this Conference will be the largest since its inception. I am hoping to see an even greater participation from Canada than in previous years.

Finally, I wish to reiterate my sincere appreciation to the Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation for spearheading the planning of this landmark Diaspora Health Forum. I look forward to the robust discussions and outcomes, which will set the stage for further collaboration with the Diaspora in this critical sector.

Together we can make a difference in the lives of our fellow Jamaicans.

Diaspora and Consular Affairs Department

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