

ADDRESS

by His Excellency, the Most Honourable
Sir Howard Cooke, ON, GCMG, GCVO, CD

At the

Annual Dinner for the Diplomatic Corps

Kings House

Thursday, 17 January 2002

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, the Hon. K.D. Knight and Mrs. Knight;
Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Foreign Trade, The Hon. Ben Clare;
Chief Justice, the Hon Mr. Justice Lensley Wolfe and Mrs. Wolfe;
Senator Dr. Oswald Harding, Opposition Spokesman on Foreign Affairs, & Mrs.
Harding;
Head of the Foreign Service, Ambassador Stafford Neil and Mrs. Neil;
Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, His Excellency Fernando Pardo and Mrs. Pardo;
Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners and Spouses;
Reverend Dr. Howard Gregory, President of the Jamaica Council of Churches and Mrs.
Gregory;

Acting High Commissioners, Charges d'Affaires and Spouses;

Other Distinguished guests, including staff of the Foreign Ministry and Kings House;
Friends all:

It is a great source of satisfaction to me that over the years, this Annual Dinner at Kings House, in honour of the Diplomatic Corps, has become a high point in the diplomatic calendar. Lady Cooke and I are always pleased to receive Your Excellencies and I spouses, but we are always particularly delighted when you share this special occasion with us. We extend to you all a very warm welcome. For those of you who have journeyed from other lands to be with us this week, may your time with us be both productive and enjoyable.

We are but seventeen days into the New Year and therefore it is still timely for me to express to you all the very best wishes of Lady Cooke and myself, that you, your families and the countries you represent, will be blessed with the fulfillment of your dearest dreams and aspirations in 2002.

This is the first time that my friend the Hon. K.D. Knight has joined me in this setting and I want to welcome him and Mrs. Pauline Knight, to what I hope will be a memorable experience for them. Mr. Minister, accept my best wishes as you continue in your new role in service of Jamaica.

From all reports, the staff of your new Ministry are already extolling your fine human

and leadership qualities. I have no doubt that the honeymoon will continue.

The Hon. Ben Clare is no stranger to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. Welcome back, to what has been your home, both as an Ambassador and as a Minister of State.

Let me also welcome, in his new role as Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, H.E. Fernando Pardo, the Ambassador of Chile, who has succeeded H.E. Raymond Valcin, former Ambassador of Haiti. Ambassador Pardo, I extend to you my heartiest congratulations, confident that you will further enhance the camaraderie and vibrancy for which the Diplomatic Corps is well known. I am even more confident that you will benefit greatly from the sterling support of your dear wife.

It is also the privilege to welcome to the family the newly accredited resident and non-resident Heads of Missions who presented credentials subsequent to last year's Dinner.

It was my pleasure to have met and received the Letters of-

The Ambassadors of-

- Germany;
- Japan;
- The Dominican Republic;
- Panama;
- Spain;
- The United States of America and might I add, the first ever female Ambassador of that country to Jamaica;
- Brazil;
- Mexico;
- Argentina;
- Haiti;
- Ireland;
- Algeria;
- Belgium;
- Hungary;

- Ukraine,
- Indonesia
- Thailand.

It also gave me great pleasure to welcome the first ever resident High Commissioner of St. Kitts & Nevis and to receive new High Commissioners of

- India and Lesotho,

who together with us belong to the Commonwealth of Nations.

Our welcome of new representatives, though pleasant, reminds us of the sad farewells which we said over the last year to several of our friends, who in serving their country so well, here in Jamaica, contributed so much to our development. Through this medium, I convey my fondest greetings and appreciation to them.

Jamaica is fortunate to enjoy strong and positive relations with countries from different regions of the world. We have steadily built diplomatic and consular links with our neighbours and friends far and wide in the forty years since we achieved our independence.

Now in its fortieth year, the Jamaican Foreign Service operates a network of 17 overseas missions, complemented by 81 Consulates General, Consulates and Honorary Consulates.

We have established diplomatic relations with 136 countries and are proud of the presence in our island of 30 bilateral resident diplomatic missions and 28 consulates.

We are proud of the excellent corps of foreign representatives to our Government. No wonder then, that the Foreign Ministry has developed the tradition honouring you through the annual Diplomatic Week.

I have come to look forward to the annual programme of Diplomatic Week for the varied opportunities it provides for interaction, in furtherance of our shared values, principles and objectives for global peace and development.

While we celebrate the friendship and common causes which define the partnership between our respective countries, we do not forget the challenges and the threats which demand the even greater collaboration of our partnership.

The unspeakable horror of September 11 has magnified for us the despicable face of
of
terror and strengthened our resolve to combat terrorism in all its manifestations.

At the global level, there is commitment to an international legal framework to facilitate inter-governmental collaboration in the defeat of terrorism. At all levels, states are acting to improve security and to cut off terrorist financing, so as to impede the nefarious strategies of terrorist organizations and networks.

But as we look to the future, we must deal with the root causes of terrorism and invest in the advancement of global justice and equity. Conflict prevention is always less costly and much more conducive to lasting peace, than is the use of force, however justifiable.

The cry for peace and development echoes across our world as this global village brings us closer to the needs and anguish of communities both within and external to our respective countries.

New conflicts arise even as we acknowledge continuing failure to resolve long-standing hostilities in several regions. The ravages on humanity caused by HIV-AIDS remain a serious threat to the welfare of peoples, including in Jamaica.

Natural disasters and horrific accidents in various fields, continue to wreak havoc on societies worldwide. Crime and violence, substantially linked with narco-trafficking and arms smuggling, increasingly take a heavy toll on our peoples, regrettably, including here in Jamaica.

Against this background, we all acknowledge the urgency of effective international cooperation and solidarity, if the peace and stability to which we all aspire, is to be achieved. No single state, however powerful, has the answer. No state, however small, can escape the responsibility of commitment and action in the search for durable solutions. This global village time and again validates the facts that we are indeed our brother's keepers and that we cannot remain isolated from our neighbour's problems.

As we in Jamaica struggle with our own problems, we are grateful for the assistance which we receive from many of the countries represented here tonight. We are encouraged by the understanding and expertise received from our partners.

They have demonstrated their faith in Jamaica and our people and in our determination to conquer the negative currents in our beautiful land.

Your Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps, you play an important role in our policies and programmes for Jamaica's optimal development. Your work and interaction with our officials and people advance the cause of good neighbourliness and by extension, of world peace. The contributions of your spouses through various programmes of social outreach cannot be underestimated.

On behalf of all Jamaicans, I thank you and look forward to continued partnership to the end that our peoples may progress and so contribute to the advancement of the

whole human race.

As you come to the final segment of Diplomatic Week, let me hope that you have found the programme stimulating. The fact that so many non-resident Heads of Mission are here for this Week, is testimony to the advantages which you have derived from this annual programme. I am pleased that some of you have even sought to have Diplomatic Week replicated in your own countries. Indeed, no higher tribute could, be paid.

I commend to you all the south coast tours arranged for tomorrow. You will visit the Black River, one of our most important ecological areas. Of historical note, the Black River came to prominence as the port from which indigo was shipped to Europe. Today, its importance is largely due to its place in the development of our south coast tourism product.

You should have a thoroughly enjoyable day on our south coast after the intellectual stimulation of the briefings and discussions which you have enjoyed - or endured during this week.

A little over a month from today, we shall be gathered here again to welcome Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second to Jamaica. I am pleased and honoured that in this her Jubilee Year, Her Majesty has chosen to visit Jamaica.

You have been a wonderful audience and I thank you. Continue to enjoy this beautiful evening in the company of friends here at Kings House.

