

**Message**  
**International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of  
Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade**  
**25 March 2014**

As the International Community reflects on one of the darkest chapters in human history, spanning more than four hundred (400) years, we pause to honour and remember the more than fifteen (15) million men, women and children ripped from their homelands and trafficked across the Atlantic into a life of captivity, degradation and indignity.

Today, we are moved to recall that chapter in our history in which our forefathers, stripped of their identities, raped, beaten and dehumanised, withstood the savage harshness of their realities and established an indelible legacy of defiance, bravery and fortitude. We are cognizant that it is through their courage, fierce determination and selflessness that we now enjoy the freedoms we have today.

The legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade is more than the story of the beaten and the downtrodden. It is a testimony to our resilience as a nation and our capacity to endure and overcome in the face of great adversity. This is the factor that motivates the leadership of Jamaica at the United Nations for the erection of the Permanent Memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, which will be erected at the UN headquarters in New York.

The theme of this year's commemoration "*Victory over Slavery: Haiti and beyond*" coincides with the selection of Mr. Rodney Leon, who is of Haitian descent, as the architect of the winning design for the Permanent Memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. This is indeed strikingly apt, given the strong connection between the Haitian Revolution and the abolition of the slave trade and slavery in the Americas as a whole.

It is also fitting that the Caribbean Community has begun the discussion on efforts to address reparations for native genocide and slavery, particularly as we stand on the eve of the Decade of Persons of African Descent to be observed by the United Nations beginning next year.

As we mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, we honour the memory of great heroes, such as Toussaint L’ouverture and Jean Jacques Desalines of Haiti; the Right Excellent Samuel Sharpe, the Right Excellent Paul Bogle, and Nanny of the Maroons of Jamaica; the Right Excellent Bussa of Barbados; King Court Tackey of Antigua and Barbuda; and Julien Fedon of Grenada.

Their legacies live on.