

**ADDRESS
BY THE
PRIME MINISTER OF JAMAICA
RIGHT HONOURABLE P.J. PATTERSON, Q.C., M.P.
TO THE
DIPLOMATIC CORPS,
TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2002**

Let me welcome Heads of Diplomatic Missions to Diplomatic Week 2002,, especially those who are experiencing this programme for the first time.

To those who recently presented credentials I extend best wishes for a successful tour of duty as you seek to strengthen relations between your respective countries and Jamaica.

I am particularly pleased to be meeting with the Diplomatic Corps so early in the year in which Jamaica celebrates its 40th anniversary of Independence.

◆ Changes in Ministerial leadership and structure

A number of events will be taking place during the year:

- The visit of Queen Elizabeth II
- The World Junior Games
- 40th Independence celebrations
- Open secret that National Elections will be held this year.

- Jamaica is a stable democracy. The Government is committed to peace and dialogue in the lead-up to the elections. Everything will be done to make the elections peaceful, free and fair.

The year 2001 was a challenging year:

- Unacceptable crime rate - particularly homicides
- Increasing signs that the country is now being used as transshipment point for narco trafficking
- The events of July 7 - 10 and subsequent Commission of Enquiry
- The events of September 11 in the United States.
- Flooding in sections of the island - Portland and St. Mary

Despite the formidable interruptions, there were positive developments.

The economy has maintained stability and predictability as demonstrated by:

- 5th consecutive year of single digit inflation
- Fluctuation of exchange rate in accordance with market conditions
- ready access to foreign currency
- NIR continues to grow
- Privatisation of IPSCO
- Divestment of NCB is imminent

- FINSAC to be phased out in the next three months.

Significant improvements in national infrastructure.

- Roads (Old Harbour Bypass/Mt. Diablo)
- Telephone (Digicel/Centennial now on stream)
- Water - massive expansion in every parish
- Public transportation (continued expansion of bus fleet in Kingston and some other urban centers)
- Expanded port facilities
- Modernization of airport facilities

Changes in the social landscape.

- Revolutionary developments at early childhood level (number of schools constructed and upgrading of the teachers in this area)
- Improved performance in CXC examination
- Increase in intake at tertiary level of education

Other social indicators.

- Increase in Minimum Wage
- Expansion of Social Safety Net
- Improvement in access to health care

MAIN TASKS NOW FACING GOVERNMENT

Continued fight against drugs and crime and violence.

- Separation of National Security and Justice
- Greater collaboration among all sectors (Government, Private Sector, Opposition and Civil Society)
- Greater understanding of changing phenomenon by the Security Forces
- Greater collaboration between Government and others who are able to help
- Increased intelligence and improved technology to fight this nuisance

Economic growth.

- 2% last year

Now that the macro-economic fundamentals are in place,, we are aiming to:

- Reduce interest rates
- Attract greater investments
- Create more jobs
- Improve conditions for small businesses,, particularly own account types of business.

Emphasis on education and human resource development to build up social capital.

- Continue improvements at early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary levels
- Practical implementation of Highway 2000
- Expansion of the Social Safety Net

We meet at a time when the practice of Diplomacy is being sorely tested by awesome developments in global affairs.

As practicing diplomats I need not remind you of your unique role in building relations between nations and peoples and promoting the fundamental ideals of peace and security.

These skills have scarcely been more vital to mankind than they are now,, as we continue to grapple with the horrible acts of international terrorism that the world witnessed on September 11, 2001.

As I told Parliament in my address on September 25, those events ushered in a new phase in international relations and shattered old assumptions about international security.

Diplomats are called upon to adapt to the challenges of a new environment. The threats posed by new levels of international terrorism and trans-national criminal activity, defy traditional approaches to international security and demand even greater co-operation among States.

At the same time, we continue to contend with significant challenges in the areas of Health, especially the AIDS pandemic that threatens the very survival of communities.

International Terrorism

No recent event has galvanized international attention as the wanton and brutal attacks in Washington DC, New York City and Pennsylvania, in which thousands of lives of persons, from scores of nations were lost.

Jamaica joined the rest of the world in condemning the heinous attacks by terrorists whose disregard for human life shocked the world on that September morning. We mourned the loss of some of our own citizens even as we shared the grief of the Government and people of the United States.

The Caribbean Community lost just under 200 persons in the tragedy.

We have committed our full support for measures to bring the perpetrators to justice. We are working together at the regional and the international levels to ensure that these events are not repeated anywhere.

At the United Nations, Jamaica participated in the decisions on these matters both in the Security Council, which we had the honour to chair in November, and in the General Assembly.

The Conference of the Heads of Government of CARICOM met in emergency Session in Nassau in the Bahamas in October. At this meeting consideration was given to the impact of these attacks and shaping of common responses both in terms of the security concerns within the region and the economic and financial impact. The Nassau Declaration on international terrorism was issued.

Arising out of these deliberations we have established a Task Force to take a fresh look at the issue of security in our Region and to develop appropriate strategies to meet the challenges that we now face.

We have also embarked on a united campaign to restore our economies to a path of growth and progress, especially in the tourism industry, which was hard hit by these events.

I was pleased to have been able to sign the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Financing at the UN Headquarters on November 11.

The several pertinent agencies are now working towards enactment of requisite legislation to permit early ratification of that Convention and also to facilitate implementation of Security Council Resolution 1373.