



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

Tuesday, December 31, 2013

FROM PRIME MINISTER THE MOST HON. PORTIA SIMPSON MILLER

My fellow Jamaicans at home and abroad and visitors, I greet you with all the freshness, promise and hope of this New Year's Day. A new chapter unfolds, a new scene opens, and a new note is struck. New possibilities await us. What will we make of the blank page which 2014 represents?

My personal wish for you is that this year will bring you closer to the achievement of your dreams and aspirations; that this will be the year you will make the breakthroughs; and that this will be the year when the Lord will enlarge your borders. My wish is that this will be your year of Jubilee, and that the Lord will bless you and your family.

My deepest wish for us as a nation is that we can forge a unity of spirit and purpose that will amaze not just others, but ourselves. I wish we could come together in a way we have never done before; that we could mobilize all our energy and passion to build Jamaica, land we love. We owe it to ourselves and to our children.

We know that when Jamaicans unite to achieve something, nothing can defeat us! We need to channel that same energy and unity into national development. We can do it, We must do it! We have to determine this year that the monster of crime must be slain. We can't sit back and watch our nation's hopes go up in gunsmoke.

Fellow Jamaicans, the Government cannot do it alone. Fighting crime takes a united effort.

As a people and a culture, we have to set our face against criminality. This must be the year when we as Jamaicans say with a every fibre of our being, "enough is enough!" where crime is concerned.

The Government has been doing its part and will redouble its efforts in 2014 to work toward a safe and secure Jamaica.

We hope to pass what has been dubbed the anti-gang legislation in the first quarter of this calendar year as well as the important DNA legislation. Among the record 40 pieces of legislation that we passed in Parliament last year were the Evidence (Special Measures) Act to allow witnesses to give their testimony via audio-visual links from remote locations or via video recording, and the Fraudulent (Special Provisions) Act 2013.

The JCF's operational capacity has been significantly strengthened with the acquisition of 89 new vehicles in late December. This was in addition to 39 other vehicles acquired earlier in the year.

A number of other measures and actions were taken last year to fight crime. Be assured, that the Government will be doing all it can during this year to secure our citizens and visitors to this island. But we cannot be successful without you. Let us together set our face against this scourge on our land. Let us resolve to remove it.

Our economic challenges continue but the facts indicate we are making progress. Economic growth returned in the third quarter of the year after six consecutive quarters of decline beginning in the January-March 2012 quarter. We have successfully passed two quarterly reviews or tests of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Cynics said we could barely pass one. But not only have we passed two, but the private sector co-chair of the Economic Programme Oversight Committee has expressed optimism about Jamaica's economic performance and prospects for this year. He has also publicly indicated his confidence in the sincerity of the Government's actions to reform the economy and foster growth.

Jamaica's meeting certain critical targets set out under our medium term economic programme has been crucial in releasing significant funds from the European Union and the World Bank. I must pause at this point to pay tribute to these international organizations which have supported Jamaica's economic and social programme.

One of the reasons I felt impelled to accept the invitation of the EU to visit Brussels last year was to show appreciation for the enormous economic and social support the EU has given to us. I want to thank the EU for its support for a range of programmes in Jamaica. I also want to thank the World Bank, the USAID, the Inter-American Development Bank and the IMF for their support.

I am glad that this Government has re-established the international credibility of Jamaica and that international financial institutions know that when we commit to a programme, we are not going to abandon it for political expediency.

Fellow Jamaicans, I know that our economic programme, with its necessary emphasis on fiscal prudence, has in some instances been hard on you. I feel your pain.

I go to the supermarket, I know what is happening to prices. But we have maintained a high level of social spending. We have continued to make critical investments in housing, health, education and social services, including the PATH programme.

Last year there was an overall increase of 15% to PATH beneficiaries, with the elderly beneficiaries receiving a 67% increase.

Last year also, some 1,000 tertiary level PATH students across the island benefitted from scholarships valued at \$100 million to complete their studies. So we are not forgetting those who are in need.

Last month, the Minister of Labour and Social Security announced a J\$75 million short term poverty intervention project to ease the burden on the most vulnerable. We also last month raised the national minimum wage as well as the minimum wage of security guards.

But we have to stay the course of economic adjustment. We have no alternative. The road might be rocky and the terrain rough. But with God as our Guide we will make it through.

I reaffirm the words of National Hero, Marcus Mosiah Garvey who said, "Let me say to you that a greater future is in store for us; we have no cause to lose hope, to become faint-hearted. We must realize that upon ourselves depend our destinies, our future. We must carve that future, that destiny".

My fellow Jamaicans, the New Year will have its challenges but also its opportunities.

Let us grasp those opportunities with both hands. Better yet, let us create our own opportunities. Let us face this New Year with courage, determination and resilience. We are a strong people, a proud people with a glorious heritage. We are Nanny's people.

We are the people of Sam Sharpe, Paul Bogle, George William Gordon; the people of Marcus Mosiah Garvey.

How can we turn our backs on the struggle of our founding fathers, Norman Washington Manley and Sir Alexander Bustamante?

Our forebears did not leave us such a rich legacy for us to squander. We must demonstrate day by day the mettle we are made of.

We have many rivers to cross, but we can make it if we really try. Let us work together. Let us unite as one Jamaican Family shaping the future together. I recently came upon some reassuring words which I would like to dedicate to each and every one of you as we embrace this New Year:

"May Light always surround you
Hope kindle and rebound you
May your hurts turn to healing
Your heart embrace feeling
May laughter infect you
Your passion resurrect you
May Goodness inspire
Your deepest desires
Through all that you reach for
May your arms never tire."

Always remember who we are as a people and, more importantly, *Whose* we are. We are God's mighty army and we can and shall defeat all the giants as we build our promise land. Happy New Year to all of you.

May God bless you and your family and may God continue to bless Jamaica, Land we love.

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