

**2016 INDEPENDENCE MESSAGE
TO JAMAICANS IN THE DIASPORA
FROM THE PRIME MINISTER OF JAMAICA
THE MOST HONOURABLE ANDREW HOLNESS, ON, MP**

My Jamaican brothers and sisters in the Diaspora, I greet you well.

It is with a sense of honor and immense pride that I convey this message as Chief Servant of our beloved country, marking the 54th anniversary of our independence.

The lowering of the Union Jack and the raising of the esteemed black green and gold bearing Jamaica flag as the clock struck midnight on August 5, 1962, ushering-in Independence Day on August 6 heralded the dawn of a new day for Jamaica and its people. Independence affirmed our sovereignty and bequeathed to us a launching pad for the creation of a more prosperous and justiciable society, where equality and respect for all would be guaranteed.

As we mark this significant occasion each year we recall the epic struggles of our forebears and the tenacity of our founding fathers in their campaign for political independence. Each in their own way ignited the flames of freedom so we could emerge from colonial rule and truly pursue nationhood.

To them we pay tribute. For to them, we are eternally indebted.

As we reflect on the journey that culminated in our nation's independence, let us recognize and embrace the role we are all called to play, whether at home or in the Diaspora, to make Jamaica as successful as she can be; enabling her many sons and daughters to pursue their aspirations and achieve their full potential.

Independent Jamaica is now 54 years old. It means that we have been in command of our own affairs for over half a century. An important part of celebrating our Independence therefore, is reflecting on our stewardship of the resources and opportunities bequeathed to us. A prominent place has to be given in those reflections to the national decisions we have made as a country, and the consequences of those decisions. I have always maintained, we have accomplished much in 54 years as an independent state, but there is a shared view that we could have, and should have achieved so much more.

The "*Emanci-pendence*" festivities must not distract us from our realities, or cause us to lose sight of the monumental work and sacrifices that still lie ahead of us. At the same time, we must not reflect for the sole purpose of engaging in blame. Indeed, this is a time for learning from our past experiences as a people, and recommitting as Jamaicans in the Diaspora, to playing a part in hastening the pace of Jamaica's growth and development while avoiding the pitfalls of the past.

As we celebrate the 54th anniversary of Jamaica's independence, I implore you as members of the Diaspora to renew and reaffirm your commitment to playing a part in addressing critical aspects of national life that remain issues of concern. I often express the view that Jamaicans domiciled in the Diaspora represent the commonwealth of Jamaica, and as such you must never cease focusing attention on matters pertinent to Jamaica's development and the quality of life of its citizens. Yours must be a spirited and sustained campaign to mobilize the Diaspora and leverage the considerable influence and network of resources at your disposal to champion Jamaica's cause and advance the development interests of our people.

The management of our economy remains a critical area of focus. As you would appreciate, a lot of hard work has gone into implementing the structural reforms required under the existing 4-year Extended Fund Facility with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). My administration is unequivocally committed to fostering and maintaining macroeconomic stability, as well as sustained debt reduction. Importantly however, we are committed to exercising diligence and creativity in spurring growth, attracting investments, providing avenues for greater Diaspora participation, and creating jobs for our people. While our hands remain firmly on the wheel in ensuring successful completion of the existing IMF programme, collaboration with other key multilateral institutions is on in earnest, and talks have already begun as to the kind of relationship Jamaica will have with the IMF when the current programme ends in March 2017. The Government is fully cognizant that while considerable strides have been made in the implementation of economic reforms, Jamaica is by no means out of the woods.

Let me encourage you to play a part as we recommit ourselves to improving the productivity and efficiency of our economy by ensuring that all our labour force is trained and certified and that businesses are able to retool and incorporate the latest technology into their production.

As we continue our journey toward development and increased prosperity as a nation, it is imperative that we embrace the opportunities that lie before us and reach for the success we are capable of attaining.

On the occasion of yet another celebration of our nation's independence, I wish for you – our brothers and sisters abroad, a very happy and fulfilling Independence!

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The Most Honourable Andrew Holness, ON, MP
Prime Minister of Jamaica
2016