



Since the staging of the inaugural Conference on the Jamaican Diaspora in June 2004 and the subsequent institution of the Jamaica Diaspora Foundation, our country has witnessed a veritable groundswell of enthusiasm and a new sense of engagement from Jamaicans abroad, which has indeed redounded to Jamaica's benefit.

In the past two years, our overseas community has forged a new compact with our government and people and this partnership has precipitated a range of key initiatives which have already begun to impact our economy and our people. From the establishment of trade councils in cities across the United States to the fashioning of new approaches to curriculum development in many of our very challenged inner-city schools, members of the Jamaican Diaspora have been coming forward with an ardor and a sense of commitment to a country which is demonstrative not merely of simple altruism, but also a strong sense of patriotism.

Friends, without equivocation, I can declare that the mantra of our 2004 conference, "Unleashing the Potential," can no longer be regarded as simply a figure of speech but instead constitutes an accurate depiction of a Diaspora movement which is currently focused on achieving clear objectives and pursuing a development mission which will significantly aid Jamaica's economic and social development.

This sense of volunteerism must be commended, given the tremendous attendant costs in time, energy and material resources expended by the leaders and active participants in the Diaspora movement. We recognize your fidelity to the cause of Jamaica and, even while geographically removed, we remain heartened by your fervent commitment to remain stakeholders in our country's future.

In June, we will be staging our second Diaspora conference in Kingston. I am buoyed by the preparatory work which is already underway as Diaspora Foundation groups in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada are in the process of holding consultations aimed at arriving at consensus positions which, in turn, will be tabled at the conference. As was the case in 2004, we are confident that the conference will benefit from the tremendous insights which will be provided by the overseas community and we are certain that the decisions taken will serve to strengthen the Foundation thus constituting the basis for future joint-action between the Government of Jamaica and the Diaspora movement.

I reiterate our Government's deep appreciation for your benevolence and prevailing sense of community as we continue to work together to advance our country's progress and aid its competitiveness, while also building a future of prosperity for this and succeeding generations.

With every good wish.

The Embassy of Jamaica's engagement with the Jamaican Diaspora movement in the United States, constitutes an important element of our mission's overall work which has been central to our representational agenda here in the United States. Indeed, the Jamaican government, particularly since 2003, has placed a high priority on enhancing the relationship between Jamaica and the Diaspora with the view to increasing the participation of Jamaicans residing overseas in our country's social and economic development.

The appointment of the Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade as the point person for Diaspora relations, has infused this relationship with an energy and focus which has served to transform the fundamental interaction between the Jamaican government and the Jamaican overseas community. The staging of the First Conference on the Jamaican Diaspora in 2004, represented a quantum leap forward in providing our nationals in the overseas community with opportunities to directly influence our development agenda. Over the last two years, Jamaicans in the United States, Britain and Canada have been participating in significant numbers in the transformation of our country's health, education and technology sectors while also promoting foreign investment in the Jamaican economy.

The Second Conference on the Jamaican Diaspora will be convened in Kingston from June 15-16, 2006 and we anticipate the staging of a successful forum which will allow for a review of achievements since 2004, and allow for a discussion of the challenges encountered, as well as an examination of the opportunities which lie ahead. In addition to deepening our collaboration with Jamaicans in the United States in the cause of Jamaica's economic advancement, the Embassy of Jamaica remains committed to forging even more meaningful partnerships with the Jamaican community in the United States aimed at raising Jamaica's profile and acquainting the American public with the creativity and dynamism that essentially characterize our country.

Last year, the coordinated efforts of the Jamaican mission in Washington and Jamaicans, particularly in the Washington, DC area, resulted in the staging of the most successful independence celebrations in contemporary Washington history. The events, which showcased Jamaica's culture and celebrated its rich culinary and artistic traditions, proved to be of tremendous value in increasing our country's visibility, not only in the Washington area but also along the Atlantic seaboard.

Our embassy remains cognizant that the success of our country and indeed of our mission, remains inextricably linked to our ability to foster and sustain the participation and support of the Jamaican Diaspora. We are strongly committed to this partnership and extend our sincere appreciation to Jamaicans in the United States as we, together, continue to build Jamaica and to ensure its prosperity and advancement.



Hon. K.D. Knight, QC, MP  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
& Foreign Trade



H.E. Gordon Shirley  
Ambassador to the USA



## DIASPORA PROVIDES CRITICAL ASSISTANCE IN EDUCATION SECTOR

Over the last year a range of key initiatives has emerged from the Jamaica Diaspora movement in the United States which has been directed at transforming secondary education in Jamaica, through a deepening partnership with the Jamaican government and the creation of a framework which will integrate approaches from both a local and developed world perspective.

The new thrust, which is at the heart of the Jamaica Diaspora Foundation's Northeastern Region Education Sector's current activities, is predicated on the central theme of the Diaspora movement, which is to harness the broad expertise and the vast array of talent and resources of Jamaicans, in the interest of Jamaica's economic and social development.

The Foundation's Education Sector, since its inception, has forged a close working relationship with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture, as well as the Embassy of Jamaica in Washington, DC, in its quest to fashion a strategic approach to modernizing the island's educational system and to assist non-traditional high schools, in particular, in their curricular development.

With the inception of the Jamaica Diaspora Foundation in the aftermath of last year's inaugural Conference on the Jamaican Diaspora, a decision was taken by its leadership to establish a number of committees or 'sectors' which would focus on a number of key issues of significant importance to Jamaica, including areas such as health, investment promotion and facilitation, security and of course, education.

Since its establishment, the Education Sector under the leadership of noted Jamaican educator and Temple University professor, Dr. Trevor Sewell, has undertaken a comprehensive campaign aimed at mobilizing Jamaicans in the United States to aid the country's educational advancement. A focal point of the sector has been to target areas of greatest need and, specifically, to identify, develop and promote long-term strategies to achieve educational excellence and to ensure that teachers and students alike become even greater stakeholders in the educational process.

To this end, the sector has been pursuing a broad agenda of support for the students of St. James High School, a designated 'Diaspora Partnership School.' During the 2005-2006 school year the Education Sector has sponsored professional development workshops in Mathematics and English for teachers, and implemented after-school

tutoring for students who are selected to take the CXC national high school examination in 2006.

The program will be coordinated by administrators from the St. James High School and the tutoring will be undertaken by qualified teachers, with the Diaspora Education Sector undertaking all expenses associated with the program. This initiative is predicated on the expectation that with the new commitment of resources, St. James High School will realize a significant increase in the pass rate at the CXC level, which is critical to the school's eventual academic rating.

In addition, the Education Sector has provided musical instruments and other instructional materials for a School Band as well as underwritten the costs of uniforms for a School Choir. The authorities at St. James High School have also accepted a challenge from the Northeast Education Sector to have both the Band and Choir fully constituted in time for an appearance at the June Diaspora Conference in Kingston.

Over the past year, the Education Sector has held meetings in the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Washington, DC, which led to the forging of a consensus resulting in the adoption of a plan of action and also a framework for its activities. A decision was also taken that the committee would inform current educational policy in the island, through the establishment of an advisory relationship with the Education Ministry, that would be structured around projects that could be measured and assessed and would have demonstrated success rates. In June, the sector held formal discussions with Education Minister, the Hon. Maxine Henry-Wilson, to acquaint her with its work plan and to exchange ideas and approaches.

According to Dr. Trevor Sewell, the Education Sector's action plan is "rooted in best practices to transform a low-performing school which would also serve as a conceptual model to be replicated across the country." He further stressed that an important and explicit objective of the sector is selecting a target school which presents "a prototype of the challenges, the commitment and the resources that would be necessary to transform a previously low-performing institution. Our objective is to have an engagement with a school that would present extraordinary challenges. In this case, St. James High School's over-capacity enrollment, its need for infrastructural improvement and its performance in national examinations evidenced a need for further staff professional development and student support," he said.

## JAMAICAN HEALTH SECTOR BENEFITS FROM INVOLVEMENT OF DIASPORA

The first cochlear implant surgery ever undertaken in the Caribbean was performed last December at the Kingston Public Hospital, representing a quantum step forward in Jamaican medicine.

The medical team was led by prominent Jamaican otolaryngologist and surgeon, Dr. Howard Francis of Johns Hopkins University and Dr. Ediel Brown, Chief of the Ear, Nose and Throat facility at the Kingston Public and Bustamante Children's Hospitals, who is a key figure in the field within the Caribbean.

Efforts to avail Jamaicans with the benefits of this medical procedure, which will increase public access to contemporary advances in hearing and oral language rehabilitation for the deaf and hard of hearing, began in 1999 with an outreach by Dr. Howard Francis to other practitioners in the region, through the Caribbean Association of Otolaryngologists. This thrust, which seeks to bring new focus on the field of hearing impairment, also stands to benefit from a developing relationship between Caribbean otolaryngology specialists and counterparts at the world-renowned Johns Hopkins University Hospital.

In the fall of 2005, Dr. Ediel Brown also participated in a program facilitated by Dr. Howard Francis at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, in preparation for the December procedure. A member of the Hopkins medical faculty, Dr. Howard Francis is also chairman of the Clinical Privileges Committee and the Performance Improvement Committee in the school's Department of

Otolaryngology. A graduate of Cornwall College, Dr. Howard Francis received his medical training at the Harvard University Medical School and has been on the Hopkins faculty for the past eight years.

The recipient of the cochlear implant is a local teacher who specializes in teaching deaf children. A graduate of the University of the West Indies, she obtained a master's degree, graduating with honours despite her physical challenge. While the subject had normal verbal language development as a child, she experienced progressive sensorineural hearing loss and became increasingly hearing-impaired and ultimately became dependent on a hearing-aid.

For his part, Dr. Ediel Brown noted that efforts to restore hearing, as well as to assist individuals who have been deaf from birth, is fundamental to improving the quality of life and providing individuals with options that will enhance their overall personal development and aid their productivity. "Those of us who can hear easily take much for granted. The (deaf) individual is isolated and immersed in a world of signs rather than speech. It not only impacts the individual, but also the family, and, in some cases, families have themselves been held at ransom," he said.

Dr. Howard Francis also pointed to the fact that the increasing attention being paid to conditions resulting in deafness or hearing impairment has led to a new collaboration – in the Caribbean – between physicians, audiologists, teachers of the deaf, parents of deaf children and private citizens. This collaborative effort has resulted in the creation of a blueprint for a comprehensive system of early identification and intervention of hearing impairment in Jamaica. "A core multidisciplinary group are now agents of change as the advocate for improvements in the management of hearing loss in Jamaica and the Caribbean," he emphasized.

## JAMAICAN ECONOMY SHOWS SUSTAINED GROWTH IN KEY SECTORS

Jamaica's economic future remains buoyant into the end of 2005 despite sustaining significant economic shocks during the year, due primarily to natural disasters which impacted the country's productive capacity. However, despite the formidable challenges posed by a record onslaught of hurricanes and floods, including Hurricanes Dennis, Emily, Rita, and Wilma, the Jamaican economy rebounded, posting real GDP growth of 2.9% at the end of the calendar year.

In addition to natural disasters, the economy was also impacted by the record high of oil prices which exceeded government's projection of \$52 per barrel and saw eventual costs of up to \$60 per barrel. In addition, the agricultural sector saw diminished outputs given the decimation occasioned by Hurricane Ivan in September of 2004, as well as protracted drought conditions which prevailed between January and April of 2005. Areas which saw recovery in early 2005 were further affected between July and October by a series of hurricanes culminating with severe flooding caused by Hurricane Wilma in early October. Notwithstanding these obstacles, growth in the economy remained positive, foreign direct investment remained buoyant and occurred at unprecedented levels, particularly in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Significant gains were also made in keeping interest rates at relatively low levels while also maintaining stability in the foreign-exchange market, supported by a robust net international reserve (NIR). A key accomplishment of 2005 was also the government's ability to preserve an existing memorandum of understanding with trade unions, as well as maintaining a social partnership with the Jamaican private sector which enabled the public sector to limit spending while at the same time adhering to key development targets.

Despite the setbacks, the Jamaican economy posted significant gains in the tourism sector which exceeded projections for 2005 in its overall performance. In the past year, stop over arrivals increased by 4.6%, crucial arrivals increased by 3.3% and visitor arrivals to Jamaica between December 15-31, 2005, increased by 19% over 2004. Industry analysts have also forecasted that the 2005 to 2006 winter tourist season will go on record as the best ever in the sector's history. In addition, visitor expenditure has been estimated at a record \$1.6 billion.

A key development in the tourism industry is also the unprecedented level of investment which is set to add an additional 5000 rooms to the country's existing stock in the near term. This new investment has been almost single-handedly undertaken by Spanish hospitality firms which have expressed significant confidence in Jamaica's tourism product. Companies which have already commenced construction include Grupo Pinero which began building a 600-room hotel in October, 2005. Grupo Pinero represents the latest entrant in the so-

called 'Spanish invasion' of Jamaica's tourism industry. The property is expected to be opened by November next year, just in time for the start of the winter tourist season.

Grupo Pinero plans to build just under 1,000 hotel rooms in Jamaica on the 200 acres of prime real estate it acquired in mid 2003 from the local construction firm, TankWeld Ltd. The Spanish firm is expected to invest about US\$200 million in its Jamaican properties. The second of the hotels, for which construction is to begin next year, is to be opened by the fall of 2007. In addition to the Pinero group, RIU Hotels and Resorts is substantially advanced in the building of a 600-room property at Mammee Bay in St. Ann, having already constructed two other hotels, with a total of 842 rooms, in Negril.

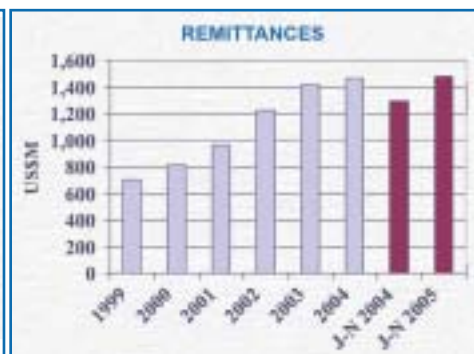
The major Spanish tourism conglomerate, Grupo Iberostar, through its subsidiary Iberostar Hotels and Resorts is already on pace for completion of a 950-room facility in Rose Hall, Montego Bay.

Jamaica's mining sector also witnessed a landmark year in production in 2005 with the bauxite/alumina industry continuing to benefit from significant expansion due to record levels of investment in the sector particularly over the last two years. Alumina Partners of Jamaica (Alpart) recorded significant alumina output levels in 2004 despite disruption to its production caused by Hurricane Ivan, and produced 1,576,500 metric tons of alumina in 2004 – some 47,700 tons more than the output in 2003, which was itself a record year.

For its part, ALCOA intends to expand the Jamalco alumina refinery in Clarendon which will add 1.5 million metric tons per year (mtpy) of production and will more than double the refinery's capacity to approximately 2.8 million mtpy. The total investment in this 1.5 million mtpy expansion will be approximately US\$1.3 billion which includes construction on a power station, as well as upgrading existing facilities to code which will enable them to comply with hurricane-wind and earthquake requirements for construction in Jamaica. The project will also provide employment for an additional 2500 persons.

The first phase of this expansion, which will add 150,000 mtpy, was announced in May, 2005 and will be completed by the end of 2006. The second phase, which adds approximately 1.35 million mtpy, is expected to be completed by the end of 2007. As part of this expansion project, Alcoa World Alumina & Chemicals (AWAC's) ownership in Jamalco will move from 50% to approximately 77%. The Government of Jamaica will continue to own the remaining portion of the company. Prior to commencing the expansion project, agreements are expected which will facilitate the introduction of natural gas to the local market. The new refinery is also expected to produce cleaner and less expensive power while also expanding supply to meet current and future demands.

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## JAMAICAN LANDSCAPE PROVIDES NEW FRONTIER FOR DISCOVERY

Jamaicans across the United States were enthralled by the Fall 2005 Travel Channel special, "Jamaica: The Ultimate Tour" hosted by NBC News Travel Editor Peter Greenberg along with the Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Hon. P.J. Patterson. The production – which captivated even Jamaicans who hitherto had professed full knowledge of every facet of their country – featured a range of breathtaking jaunts, such as hiking to the top of the Blue Mountain, exploring the depths of the Cockpit Country, to an excursion on the Black River and a canopy zip-line tour atop the trees in Cranbrook Rainforest in St. Ann.

The airing of the NBC feature has since imbued a number of Jamaicans in the Diaspora with a new-found curiosity for their homeland and inspired an interest in exploring the diverse natural offerings that constitute the so-called 'derelict' Jamaican landscape.

The program took time to give full focus to the 550 square kilometer geographical labyrinth of razor-sharp limestone peaks, underground rivers, caves, treacherous sinkholes and diverse flora and fauna encompassing a virtually uninhabited region of Jamaica known as the Cockpit Country. Formerly a safe haven for Maroons who escaped the bondage of slavery in the 18th century, it is Jamaica's largest wilderness area, containing the most endemic population of wildlife and natural vegetation. Comprising land from the parishes of Manchester, St. Ann, St. Elizabeth and St. James, though lying predominantly in the parish of Trelawny, it is quietly becoming a virtual playground for the

adventure-seeking traveler looking for an alternative to the typical sun and sand vacation.

Again, far from the hackneyed tourist track in Rock Spring in Southern Trelawny is a literal Shangrila for adventurers of all levels to go spelunking in the winding caves, featuring underground pools and limestone tunnels which open up to caverns as big as a football field. For more experienced spelunkers, there is a four hour tour through the Quashie Cave. This cathedral-like cave has several exceptional natural formations and is accessed via a series of steep ladders and rope handrails. Scrambling over boulders brings one to the cavern's massive "cathedral room" and rope assisted waterfall descent, where guides point out rare formations and ancient fossils.

A stones throw away from Ocho Rios, visitors can experience nine different zip-line traverses from 105 feet to 660 feet apart through the canopy of the Cranbrook Rainforest in the Laughlands River gorge. Canopy tour guides assist participants with the high-angle equipment and techniques to move from platform to platform.

Guided hikes and caving opportunities are available through a number of tour operators such as Cockpit Country Adventure Tours ([www.stea.net/ccat\\_main.htm](http://www.stea.net/ccat_main.htm)); SunVenture Tours ([www.sunventuretours.com](http://www.sunventuretours.com)) and Unique Jamaica ([www.uniquejamaica.com](http://www.uniquejamaica.com)), a company that has created a network of 86 tourism-related organizations offering discovery tours in the area.



### DIARY OF EVENTS

- June 4, 2006 Jamaican Women of Washington, 4th Annual Tea-Off to Good Health and Silent Auction, Washington, DC. [www.jwow.org](http://www.jwow.org)
- June 22 - 24, 2006 RISARC & CCGI Foundations Second Annual Caribbean Classic Golf Invitational, Cinnamon Hill Golf Course, Montego Bay, Jamaica. [www.caribbeangolfclassic.org](http://www.caribbeangolfclassic.org)
- July 12 - 15, 2006 29th Convention of the National Association of Jamaican and Supportive Organizations (NAJASO), Silver Spring, Maryland. [www.najaso.org](http://www.najaso.org)



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