

ADDRESS TO THE PNP ANNUAL CONFERENCE

By Party President, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, M.P., O.N.

Sunday, September 16, 2012

One Vision; One Mission; People Power

**Comrade Chairman,
Comrade PJ Patterson,
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corp,
Specially invited Guests,
Comrades from the Diaspora,
Comrades All,
My fellow Jamaicans,**

I greet you with the spirit of the Rising Sun, which rose this morning over the majestic Blue Mountains and shone down on this blessed Jamaican countryside with its glorious rays, stimulating energy and awesome power.

To God be the Glory. Thank you Lord.

We have all gathered in this place in our Fiftieth Year of Independence.

You came here from Cornwall

You came from Middlesex

You came here from Surrey

You traveled from far and come from near.

You have come to listen and you have come to share.

To contribute to the vision;

To join in on the mission;

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY1

To bring People Power from across the nation,

To this place - right now - right here.

Every comrade, every group, every constituency and members of every region gathered here, every Jamaican, wants the Jamaican family to thrive and our communities to grow.

Most of all we want to build a flourishing nation....

With the blessings of the Almighty, the power of the people and we come here united, victorious and strong. Singing with one voice the harmonious song:

One Vision. One Mission. One Nation!

Cdes, Fellow Jamaicans,

What a difference a year makes.

In this arena last year, we promised to free Jamaica from an oppressive government;

Last year this time we set a goal to rescue our country from international disgrace and social and economic degradation. Last year this time, Jamaica was headed in the wrong direction. All the polls said it. The People confirmed it in dramatic and overwhelming fashion on December 29, 2011. They handed the People's National Party a landslide victory after just four years.

Today, we can say, in the words of our founding leader and Father of our Nation: *Mission Accomplished! Mission Accomplished!* The people spoke again in March. They handed the PNP all thirteen Parish Councils and the Portmore Municipality. Fourteen PNP Mayors! 42 M.P.'s.

Comrades, we did it. We did it together! We give thanks to the Almighty for giving us the courage and the strength and for giving us the victory. "Thank you Lord it's shining time again."

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY2

Like Marcia Griffiths sang:

So to all who have been there through the tears...

Thank you all... it would not be the same

Thank you all....

The seeds we've sown have finally grown

...and it feels like shining time at last.

Thank you, the members, supporters and well-wishers of this great Party.

Thank you - those who left their families and went into the hills and valleys; drove the highways walked the byways; into every nook and cranny of every constituency to remind the people of the virtues of the People's National Party.

Special thanks to the children for their love and warmth. They gave me inspiration and they keep me going. I thank the hundreds of thousands of Jamaicans from all walks of life, who turned out to register their support for the PNP. We thank those who donated from their business despite the harsh economic circumstances. I thank those who toured with us. I thank the canvassers, the indoor and outdoor agents, the runners, drivers and organizers.

Thank you, thank you, thank you all.

Cdes, Ladies and gentlemen;

What a difference a year makes!

This victory came at the right time.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY3

It came in time for the People's National Party to lead Jamaica into our Fiftieth Anniversary celebrations. Some tried to re-write history, but we know that it was the PNP that led the independence movement. History has now presented us the honour of leading the country at this time. We had a glorious celebration – from significant international visits from Africa, the USA, the Caribbean, and Europe; to wonderful Jamaica 50 celebration events. We had a phenomenal Olympic showing where the black, green and gold flew high. We all felt proud to be Jamaican.

That set the stage for a new leg of the Journey....the next phase of the mission... in answer to the loud and resounding call of the people.

LEST WE FORGET

Cdes, Fellow Jamaicans,

Last year this time, many things were going in the wrong direction.

Lest we forget!

- We rescued Jamaica from a high-handed and reckless government.
- They were insensitive and disconnected from the people.
- They dictated rather than communicated.
- They would not listen to anything but their own voices.

Lest we forget:

- They wrecked the economy.
- Quarter after quarter they could not tell the country even zilch about the IMF negotiation.

It is funny...now, all of a sudden they have found their expert voices and are talking about the IMF deal.

- They nearly doubled our national debt
- They left a huge economic mess.

Now we are the ones who will have to fix it and take Jamaica back to a more progressive and productive pathway.

Where there was no hope; the PNP offers new hope.

A NEW DIRECTION

Comrades, ladies and gentlemen, Our work has begun. Having set the record straight we leave that behind us. This is a time for fixity of purpose. This is a time for action. This is a time for work. The PNP offers a new direction. We offer a different, more democratic style of leadership.

We bring to the table a different way of thinking and a new way of conducting public affairs.

We respect the people, all the People. We respect our public servants.

That is why the people said—*not once, but twice; not by a slim margin, but by a landslide*—that they prefer the PNP way. They prefer our style.

Comrades, we know that we cannot build a nation by creating disunity and discord.

There are some who want to see the backs of persons who have been strategically embedded in the system in the last four years.

Some of you want me to fire left, right and centre.

But that is not how a progressive government works.

We cannot become better and remain better by doing the same things that they did.

“An eye for an eye will leave everybody blind” and ‘slash and burn politics’ will leave the country in ashes.

We don’t believe in destruction; the PNP is a nation-building Party.

And when the going gets tough, the PNP gets going.

When the going gets rough, we see the true resilience of the Jamaican people.

We have always had faith. It has never failed us. We have faith everlasting.

Yet, the good book (James 2:20) tells us ‘Faith without works is dead’.

We also have a lot of work to do...together.

“Everybody must work” to build back Jamaica.

There are some of you with doubts – I know.

Others have fears – I know that too.

There are some with questions – as you should.

To you I say, ‘the darkest hours come right before the dawn’.

The Rising Sun is sure to come up over this God-blessed Jamaican countryside.

“Jah-Jah never get weary yet” - nor will we get weary and impatient now.

ECONOMY AND IMF AGREEMENT

Comrades, fellow Jamaicans, I would be the last to tell you that our economic situation is where we want it to be.

It is not good, but it is not unredeemable.

There are some who may not recall, but here are the facts:

In 2007, poverty was left at 9.8 percent. That was the lowest in the history of the country. Under the JLP, it grew to nearly 20%. I am determined to bring it back down.

Foreign Direct investment fell from US1 Billion under the PNP Administration to over \$200 million under the JLP administration. We are driving that back up.

Debt moved from \$980 billion to 1.6 trillion in 4 years.

We inherited a national debt that increased by almost 60% in four short years. 58% of the entire Budget will pay debt this fiscal year.

That is the situation that we have inherited. The government has little money to do anything. That is the plain truth.

The global economic challenges and the mismanagement and squandering of our precious resources by the last administration left us with no choice but to return to the International Monetary Fund to negotiate a new agreement.

Let me remind this country that when we came to office the IMF programme had broken down. We had to start all over again.

Experience taught us that whenever we enter into a programme with the IMF, there will be some conditions that we have to comply with.

The previous administration agreed to some preconditions for the IMF loan they signed in 2010. These preconditions included pension reform, tax reform and public sector transformation.

These conditionalities should have been implemented by the former Finance Minister and his government.

Cdes, fellow Jamaicans, you would never know that from the way they are now profiling.

They are the ones who caused the IMF negotiations to breakdown.

They are the ones who are denying Jamaica the ability to draw down on billions of dollars.

They broke it. Now we have to fix it.

Now we are pushing as hard as we can to complete negotiations on a new IMF Agreement as soon as possible.

My Comrades, fellow Jamaicans, every negotiation is a process.

It is a delicate give-and-take - and that takes time. It is difficult to provide a definitive date for an IMF agreement.

What I can tell you is that an IMF agreement is critical to improving investor confidence.

It is also important in unlocking hundreds of millions in foreign exchange inflows from a number of international agencies.

The inflows of these funds are necessary to maintain our net international reserves, as well as to keep our dollar stable. That is why my administration, your government, is doing everything possible to secure an agreement with the IMF. We know that if we do not take some necessary steps now, our circumstances will only get worse. We know that we must make some difficult choices today in order to have a better tomorrow.

Today, I say to Jamaica that we understand what needs to be done. We understand that it has to be done. We understand that it has to be done s-e-n-s-i-b-l-y and responsibly.

As I have always said we will be balancing the books while balancing people's lives. That is what we are trying to do now. We will not let you down. At the same time as we engage with the IMF we are embarking on measures within our limited resources to improve the lives of our people.

The Government has taken a three-pronged approach to economic growth and development.

We are working:

1. To restore the Fiscal Accounts and the level of the National Debt to sustainable levels;
2. To achieve an appreciable level of economic growth with increased Employment;
3. To do all we can to protect the most vulnerable persons in our society. This includes our children, the elderly, persons with disabilities and the poor.

We have to achieve these goals and we have to work together.

Ultimately, we have to do what is best for Jamaica and will have to make some sacrifices.

Those who can give more will have to give more.

We are all in this thing together and we cannot progress as a nation by leaving some of our people behind. The rising tide of development must ‘float all boats.’ We have to move all our people along the path to progress – not just some.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

We came to office with the Progressive Agenda as our guide and a Manifesto as our action plan.

To achieve the goals of the Progressive Agenda and the manifesto requires a partnership between the people and the government.

The programmes that will lead to genuine and sustainable economic and social development must be driven by that partnership.

It must be driven by People Power.

We are committed these partnerships!

During the first nine months in office we have been meeting with several organizations and civil society groups.

We remain committed to working with you all as partners in the development of our people and the building of our country.

We have continued to maintain an open door policy with the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica, the Jamaica Manufacturing Association, the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce, the Jamaica Small Business Association and the Small Business sector.

We believe that their innovation and enterprise are critical to achieving growth and economic development.

There are a number of business opportunities that are available in our country.

We urge local investors to continue to take advantage of them in the same way that overseas investors are seeking to do.

Partnership pulls in both directions. The onus is on all of us to make our best effort if everyone is to benefit.

Waivers

Cdes, fellow Jamaicans, we have spent the first nine months pursuing tangible 'block-and-steel' achievements.

We have also been working on the intangibles which are essential to achieving our growth and development targets.

We have had to rebuild the foundations of trust and respect that have been destroyed.

We have had to mend fences. We have had to restore relationships locally and overseas.

We are restoring Jamaica's credibility abroad.

We have replaced the previous *take-it or-leave-it* attitude with dialogue and cooperation.

We are restoring respect and dignity to the offices of Government.

We are restoring confidence in Jamaica.

This work takes the patience and skill required for tough negotiations.

It requires strategic discourse - talking to the right people, at the right time, in the right way.

Once achieved, this part of the work will make the rest of the journey to a productive and prosperous Jamaica so much easier.

Cdes, let me share with you some of what we are doing to achieve economic growth and development with increased employment.

Despite the challenges we face, much work has been done in just nine months:

Our focus has been on housing, water, creating employment and seeking investments.

We are delivering these while ensuring that we keep pace with all other areas of governance – especially education, health, agriculture and national security.

We have had to think...in addition to dealing with the debt and our other economic challenges; which are linked to the global economic situation; what can we do within our means, to advance economic activity while, at the same time improve the lives of our people?

I will demonstrate how each of our sectoral activities link into each other for a holistic, approach to planned growth and development.

A PROGRESSIVE APPROACH TO HOUSING

Building houses always serves to stimulate economic activity. It also solves one of our greatest challenges, providing affordable housing for our people.

The PNP administration has taken a progressive approach to housing.

I have instructed that there be new emphasis in six major areas:

- 1. Providing more housing for rural communities.**

Just last week we broke ground for the Nashville Housing Development in St Mary. It is one of many rural housing developments to come.

It has a value of 1 billion dollars of new investment in rural Jamaica.

Since the beginning of this year we have completed:

- 918 houses in Longville, Phase 3, in Clarendon.**
- 258 Serviced Lots in Perth Phase 1 in Manchester.**
- Another 140 Serviced Lots in Creighton Hall in St Thomas.**

More work, less talk.

- 2. I have also instructed that we focus on developing complete communities rather than just housing schemes.**

Depending on the populations of the communities, we are including sports facilities, green spaces, community centres, and basic schools in the housing developments+

We are building communities and transforming lives.

Last week, I opened the Trench Town Basic School. Now, the residents of Paradise Court can send their little ones in their community.

3. I have given instructions that the age of young professionals to receive housing benefits be expanded from 25 – 30 years, to 25 to 40 years. My mandate is to build houses especially for these young professionals and to reserve houses for persons with disabilities.

4. During my budget presentation in June of this year, I spoke of a major housing initiative of providing housing units to poor households.

The Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing has joined with Food for the Poor to erect 1,200 two bedroom units.

We are now in the process of selecting the persons who will benefit from these houses.

48 housing solutions, for which work was stopped under the former administration, are also being completed in Majesty Gardens

4. We are taking a joined-up approach to development. That is what we are doing at Nashville Housing Scheme in St. Mary.

The NHT is working with the National Water Commission and the Parish Councils to provide thousands of Jamaicans, who never had piped water before, or had limited water supply, with the precious commodity.

Now, the young woman in Nashville can realize her dream of starting her hairdressing business because she will have regular, piped water.

The policeman in Islington, who was only had water on Tuesdays and Saturdays, will see it run through his pipes every day of the week.

The farmer in Clonmel will have water to tend his crops and livestock.

More work less talk.

WATER

As you see, housing and water are naturally linked.

That is why another area of emphasis this year is water.

We recognize the importance of water to our people. Water is indeed life, yet there are still too many people without this precious commodity.

With this in mind we have completed:

- The Rio Cobre Pipeline in St. Catherine
- The Essex Valley Pipeline in St. Elizabeth
- The Savannah Cross Pipeline in Clarendon and
- The Stillwell Road Pipeline in St. Andrew

More work, less talk.

We will also be bringing water to:

- Mason River and Bullhead in Clarendon
- New Pariel and Sheffield in Westmoreland
- Burnt Savannah in St. Elizabeth
- Cascade/Claremont and Jericho in Hanover.... and

- **Victoria Town/Cross Keys in Manchester**

More work, less talk.

EMPLOYMENT

Comrades, the employment numbers are far from where we want them to be. During our tenure, we took unemployment down to 9.6%, the lowest levels in history. When we came back as government in January 2012, unemployment had soared to over 14%.

Comrade, This government is determined to reduce unemployment. We did it before and we will do it again.

That is why we have the JEEP. That is why we have established the Jamaica Employ Initiative. That is why we are encouraging investment

Even before we took office I realized that the combination of job losses and the absence of new employment opportunities had rapidly created a sense of hopelessness, particularly among our young people. That is why we formulated and implemented the JEEP – complete with the element of training.

To date the JEEP has employed over 15,000 persons across all parishes:

All of those persons have been able to lend additional financial support, no matter how small, to their families. We are now getting ready to roll out Phase-Two.

This is an investment of \$6 billion in the economy.

It will be put 35,000 to 40,000 more people to work.

As a responsible government we could not sit on our hands and do nothing. We saw job creation as an emergency. We have answered the call for as many as we could.

JEEP is an emergency programme to rescue some of our people from desperation and destitution. Beyond the emergency, we are fully aware that we need to create more sustainable jobs and we are working towards that.

JAMAICA EMPLOY PROGRAMME:

We know that no government by itself can solve all the problems of any nation. However, government must play its part and lead the process where necessary. That is the principle that led to the Jamaica Employ Programme.

The Government is working through the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce to encourage companies employ at least one additional qualified professional. Through this partnership we are aiming to create 40,000 jobs. I thank all members of the private sector who heard my call and responded immediately.

I thank the captains of industry from large and medium sized companies. I thank the operators of small businesses, who are making an extra effort to employ one additional qualified individual. They are putting their country first. They have not asked what this country can do for them, but have demonstrated what they are prepared to do for their country. They have demonstrated that they are equal partners in Jamaica's drive for development for all.

INVESTOR INTEREST

My Comrades, fellow Jamaicans I have been working hard with the Cabinet and the Economic Development Committee to secure additional investments and facilitate growth, employment and development. As a result, more than a dozen investment projects will commence during 2012/2013.

These have a projected capital expenditure of US\$825.9M. That is 7.5 billion Jamaican dollars. The state of the country requires that we go after every single employment opportunity. Every single job counts.

As we say, 'one one cocoa full basket' and 'every mickle mek a muckle'.

That is why we welcome the job creation activities by:

- **The Dolphin Cove Group, which is working on another dolphin attraction and an animal park.**
- **The West Kingston Power Partners, who are building a 66 megawatt energy plant.**
- **The Hinduja Global Solutions, which started an ICT project last month.**
- **Vistaprint has also expanded its ICT operations.**
- **Sutherland Global, a call centre out of India, will begin operations in Jamaica in October.**

Those investments will generate nearly seven thousand jobs in this year. More work, less talk. From the outset our mission has been to rebuild investor confidence. It is already happening. THERE ARE MORE PROGRAMMES IN PROGRESS AND NEW ONES TO COME!

They all integrate into a comprehensive, unified plan for growth, development, job creation within a framework of dignity and decency. Agriculture, health, energy, the environment, labour, culture, sports information, tourism, security....every sector linked together, working together.

I will give you just a few examples of the work in progress:

Agriculture is a critical element of our national development strategy. It is geared towards improving the lives of our citizens, particularly those in rural Jamaica. We have major projects

focusing on food security, agro processing, agro parks and the social transformation of sugar areas, among others.

In Health, we are developing five centres of excellence across the island to improve Primary Health care. We have settled on a location for the Children's Hospital in Western Jamaica. We are in the early phases of getting the design and feasibility work done.

We are also making strides in addressing the needs of Cancer patients. We aim to provide a location where the full range of treatments that cancer patients will require under one roof. Patients can then access care that is affordable and dignified.

That Cdes and friends requires more work, less talk.

Let me turn to the question of road repairs – another economic activity that also serves to improve our infrastructure.

The much touted JDIP programme was to last five years at US\$80 million per year. When we got in, we discovered that in less than two years, the JLP administration had committed US\$398 million dollars. Only \$2 million was left for the three remaining years. It was because of this careless disregard of the fiscal situation that Dr. Phillips had to present a supplementary budget just after we took office.

We had to clean up what the left behind. When we analyzed the situation we realized that we could not afford any new, large projects at this time. Rather, through a combination of sources we will be spending over \$1 billion on a comprehensive road patching programme.

You have already started to see the results of this programme. It will be intensified over the next six months. The work will be carried out with equity. This is a project to improve the road conditions for the citizens of Jamaica and will not be implemented along party lines.

In the Energy Sector, the Government of Jamaica has received financing from the Inter-American Development Bank of US\$20 million for Energy Efficiency and Conservation Improvement in the public sector.

The objective of the Programme is to enhance Jamaica's Energy Efficiency and Energy Conservation potential through the design and implementation of cost saving Energy Efficiency and Energy Conservation measures in the Public Sector.

We continue to explore alternative energy sources to reduce the cost of and dependence on traditional power sources.

At the Ministry of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change one emphasis is on Land titling. We will ensure that families can now get titles for the land that their families have occupied for several generations.

More work, less talk.

We have also broken new ground Jamaica is the first Small Island Developing State that has established a Ministry with specific reference to Climate Change. It is an area of critical national and international importance. We are developing a Climate Change Policy. We will make public awareness and education programmes a primary focus of this policy.

We are now working on an exciting new project that will make Jamaica into a world class international hub for world trade by developing our wharves, harbours, and transshipment system.

This big idea of a Logistics Hub at the centre of the Americas serving global markets, enjoys the total buy-in of the government.

Work is now being done to prepare us to move full speed ahead with this transformative mega-project.

This links into the mega projects under consideration:

- **The South to North Highway project that links Mandela Highway to Ocho Rios. This is valued at US\$600m over three years**
- **The Fort Augusta Port Expansion Programme**
- **Expansion of the Kingston Transshipment Zone.**
- **The Caymanas Economic Zone**
- **And Several Hotel Projects that have been previously announced.**

These are part of the vision to facilitate growth and sustainable development and provide employment.

This country is, once again, poised for success. These projects are all critical to our growth strategy. Our geographical location on a major international route gives us a major advantage to provide services to global importers and exporters.

So we do have a plan Comrades.

Don't let anyone tell you that we don't.

These are elements of that plan

They are not arbitrary, knee-jerk activities.

Every system, every sector and every industry fits together within that single, unified plan.

Our objectives are clear. We are on a mission to rebuild Jamaica's economy. Our methods are sound. Implementation is our priority....more work, less talk.

Judge us not by words only. Judge us not by the 'sound and fury' of a gilded tongue. Heaven knows you have had enough empty eloquence over the last four years. Judge my government by our actions, by our programmes and by our results.

There will be perpetual evaluation. Look for the outcomes.

It has been eight-and-a-half months...not even a complete nine-month period. Our Manifesto covers a period of five years. Our Progressive Agenda provides everlasting principles. We are bound by them.

CLOSING

Comrades, the road we must take will not be an easy one. We have embarked upon a new leg of our journey. We all are being called upon to turn 'cant do' and 'hard-to do' into 'must do' and 'will do'.

We have come this far together. We must travel the rest of the path, together. We have to prepare our bodies for this journey. We have to prepare our minds for this journey. This is a time for calm and focus. It is a time for steady persistence. Agitation, anxiety, panic and posturing will not serve us well on this journey. 'Talking without speaking' and 'hearing without listening' will take us no further than into an empty tower of babble. We have work to do...and as the Rt. Excellent Norman Washington Manley, one of our founding fathers told us:

But if we start aright, if we never desert our own principles, if we believe in what we are aiming at, if we appreciate those who regard the country as their home, those who believe that a real civilization is possible for people of mixed origins....

...if we never allow people to deflect us from our goals, those who would like to continue to live in the feeling that Jamaica is the greatest little country to make their living in, and the nicest country is the world to have a holiday in...

...if we can do those things and be true to what we believe in, true to the ideas we have started and if we can combine that with hard work and practical intelligence, and with a readiness to do that work and show that intelligence in our own affairs...

...then I believe we will have launched (tonight) a movement which is like nothing else started in Jamaica, and make if this country a real place that our children will be proud to say

'we come from Jamaica'."

I invite all my Ministers and State Ministers to stand with me. Stand too with me Jamaica.
Together we pray *Eternal Father, Bless our Land, Guide us with thy mighty hand...*

We know that this is shining time again.

As sure as each day there will be the rising sun after every dark night, so too are we assured that it will shine blessings upon us...

Marcia Griffiths sang it for all of us gathered here:

We've had some fears

We've had some doubts

But through it all

We stuck it out

We'll make it through the broken glass

Thank you Lord It's shining time at last!

Let us all in this our Fiftieth Year of Political Independence accept the principle that this is the right time.

This is the growing time.

This is the rebuilding time.

This is the investment time.

This is the partnership time.

This is the caring time.

It is the people's time .

It is Jamaica's time.

Thank you Lord it's Shining time again.....

God bless you all.