

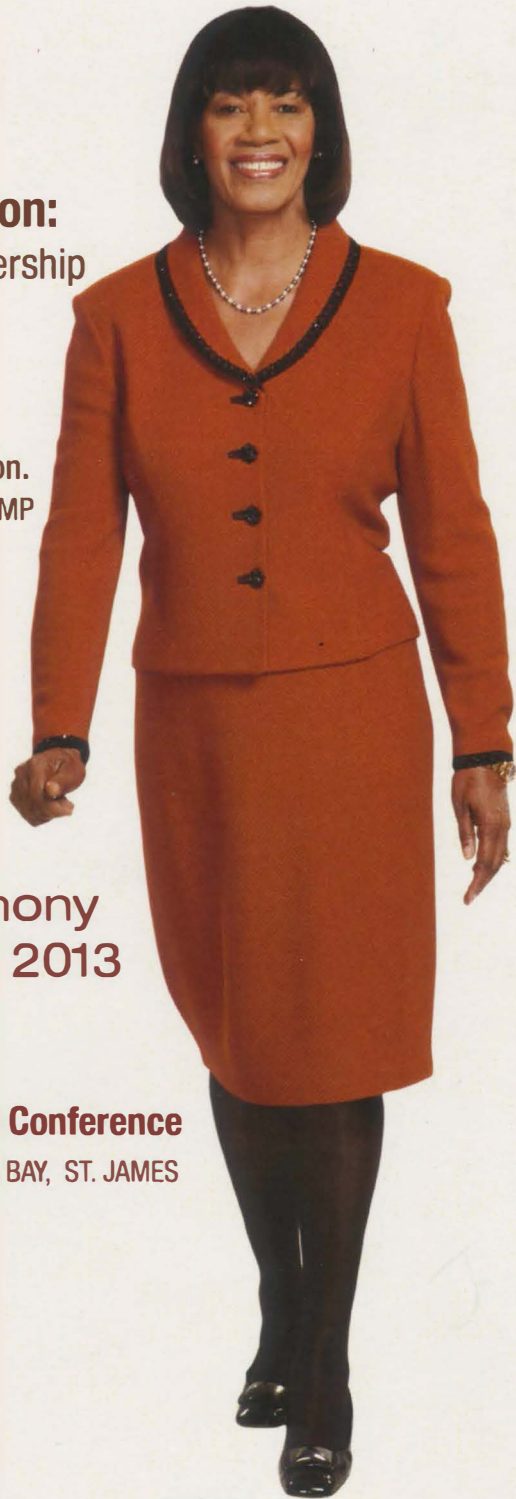
B/n Miller, Portia



A Nation on a Mission:
Jamaica – Diaspora Partnership
for
Development

Prepared Address

**Prime Minister the Most Hon.
Portia Simpson Miller, ON, MP**



**Opening Ceremony
Sunday June 16, 2013**

5th Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference

HILTON ROSE HALL RESORT, MONTEGO BAY, ST. JAMES



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OPENING CEREMONY

SUNDAY JUNE 16, 2013

Hilton Rose Hall Resort
Montego Bay, St. James
6:00 p.m.

I am truly delighted that you are here for this the fifth staging of the Jamaica Diaspora Conference!

I know that for some of you, making the trip to Jamaica would have come at some personal sacrifice. I am however, happy that you made the effort.

I have been looking forward to this event for months and it is my pleasure on behalf of the Government to officially welcome you home and to this landmark Conference.

Let me at this point, pause to congratulate the Preparatory Committee as well as the numerous government, private sector and civil society entities, which are responsible for organising this Conference.

I have been looking forward to this event for months and it is my pleasure on behalf of the Government to officially welcome you home and to this landmark Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are meeting at a time when there are numerous challenges all around the world.

Nation states, especially small island developing states like Jamaica, are especially vulnerable to these challenges.

Yet, in the face of these difficulties, we are certain of one thing.

That is – we will always be a hopeful people.

We will never give in. We will never give up until we succeed.

Whether here on the 'rock' or in cities around the world, the spirit of the Jamaican people will never be broken.

If chattel slavery was unable to break the spirit of our ancestors, we could never be daunted.

We must recapture their strength, their courage and determination to succeed.

As Jamaicans, as one people with one aim, one hope, one destiny, we will succeed.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller addressing the 5th Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference.

Our place as 'pockets of light' in the world will never be extinguished, and our fierce resolve for economic independence will never be diminished.

You know the challenges we face because you have remained connected on our collective journey as a nation.

Our efforts to get our fiscal house in order and our approach to the International Monetary Fund have been necessary and critical steps in securing the financial resources to help restore stability in the economy.

This, however, is by no means sufficient to address our economic and social problems.

My life and career in politics and Government have been about lifting our people out of the cycle of poverty and despair.

In furtherance of that mission, my Administration has embarked on an aggressive Growth and Development Strategy to spur investments, create jobs, boost business and create a better quality of life for all Jamaicans.

The Jamaican Diaspora is central to our nation's Growth and Development Strategy.



Participants at the 5th Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference listen to Prime Minister Simpson Miller.

We take the position that Jamaica's growth and prosperity agenda is incomplete without the committed engagement and active participation of the Diaspora.

We are resolutely committed to implementing the policies and programmes necessary to facilitate increasing levels of

inclusiveness and involvement to make Jamaica-Diaspora investments, business and philanthropic activities, seamless and successful.

I encourage you to use your next three days here in Jamaica to enquire into the opportunities to invest and to do trade and business with your country, no matter how small.

I also encourage you to carefully consider how you may transfer the fruit of your intellect – *your knowledge, your experience, and your exposure* – to truly partner with us so that we can overcome and solve some of our perennial social issues.

The significant remittance receipts and the hundreds of medical and educational missions are testament to this. The nation is deeply grateful for your contributions on so many levels.

I am convinced that there are solutions in the Jamaican Diaspora.

I ask you this evening, for your sincere partnership and your committed participation.

I do know the Jamaican Diaspora has been very benevolent.

The significant remittance receipts and the hundreds of medical and educational missions are testament to this. The nation is deeply grateful for your contributions on so many levels.

That is the reason the scope and scale of partnership between the home country and its Diaspora must assume new shapes, progressive patterns and expansive imagination. Our island with its vibrant Diaspora which I am informed is more than twice the home population of nearly three

million, is in the top echelons of the most loved and recognisable nations in the world.

Our cultural strength and global personality far outweigh our size as a small island developing state.

We know, instinctively and by our study of other countries like Israel, India, Ireland, China and Mauritius, that it is possible to harness a global 'brain bank' and 'talent pool' of Jamaican professionals and skilled workers.

We know, by virtue of the immense success of the Diaspora policies and programmes of these nations, that they have been able to leverage significant wealth and skills technology transfer into their respective territories.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller greets Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. A.J. Nicholson, as she arrived for the opening ceremony of the Jamaica Diaspora Conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me pause here to commend the continuing work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade under the leadership of Ministers Nicholson and Brown in developing a comprehensive Diaspora Policy.

This policy will deepen the institutional structures of the Diaspora Movement, and will be the basis on which a comprehensive Database of the Jamaican Diaspora will be developed.

This Diaspora Database will, among other things, allow us to present to the world, a smarter, stronger and more diverse workforce to attract investments to Jamaica, to access and distribute our exports into global markets, and to deepen the linkages and benefits to the domestic economy.



Prime Minister Simpson Miller in discussion with former Tourism Minister and Member of Parliament for East Central St. James, Edmund Bartlett.

Unleashing the power of the people, at home and in the Diaspora, is central to achieving our economic and social goals.

Along with our Diaspora we also need our international partners and we will continue to invite foreign direct investment.

Belgian-registered companies have invested in our transport sector; the French in our road network infrastructure; the Spanish in expanding our tourism industry, and the Chinese in sugar cane manufacturing, bridges and other infrastructure developments, and these are all welcome.

Belgian-registered companies have invested in our transport sector; the French in our road network infrastructure; the Spanish in expanding our tourism industry, and the Chinese in sugar cane manufacturing.

There is room and space for everyone to participate.

This Conference is therefore a clarion call to all Jamaicans, at home and abroad, to engage in Jamaica's drive for growth development.

I hope you will grasp the opportunities that will be presented at this Conference for investments in business and social projects.

I hope we can win your confidence in a new way, when we say to you that we are determined as a Government to put you, our Diaspora, at the heart of the Growth and Development Agenda.

As we salute those who are no longer with us, such as the visionary Professor the Honourable Rex Nettleford and early pioneer Travis Johnson, we must re-double our efforts to strengthen the institutional mechanisms for the Diaspora Movement.

These include the Jamaican Diaspora Foundation and Institute, and the Diaspora Advisory Boards.

Let me express my gratitude and congratulations to the members of the Advisory Board from the different regions across North America and the United Kingdom for your yeoman service in waving high the Jamaican flag in your jurisdictions.

My friends, we must never lose sight of the need to keep regenerating our Diaspora Movement with new ideas and the boundless energies of our youth.

We must increase our outreach to the Youth of our Diaspora, and in so doing, build upon inspiring projects like the Diaspora Youth Connect that is making a difference in inner city communities like August Town, Trench Town, Mountain View, Tivoli Gardens and Flankers.

My friends, we must never lose sight of the need to keep regenerating our Diaspora Movement with new ideas and the boundless energies of our youth.

The appointment of a Minister with portfolio responsibility for Diaspora Affairs in 2004 was an important decision in support of the sustained development of this process, I have given instructions for the setting up of an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Diaspora Affairs.

Through this Committee, I expect to receive detailed and regular reports on Diaspora issues.

The Joint Select Parliamentary Committee on Diaspora Affairs is another important instrument, which was designed to provide a direct channel to the corridors of decision-making and should be utilised to greater effect.

I am also pleased to report to you that throughout the past ten years, there has been a progressive sensitisation

of Government Departments and Agencies on issues and services pertaining to the Diaspora.



Prime Minister Simpson Miller greets actress Sheryl Lee Ralph and her mother, Ivy Ralph.



Prime Minister Simpson Miller speaking with Executive Director, Jamaica Diaspora Institute, Professor Neville Ying.

To this end, Diaspora Units have been established in various agencies of Government, most notably, in the Ministry of Health, Jamaica Customs and the Trade Board.



Prime Minister Simpson Miller speaking with British entrepreneur Keith 'Levi Roots' Graham at the Conference, while Special Advisor to the Prime Minister, Delano Franklyn, looks on.

In keeping with the new approach of this Administration, JAMPRO has also designed a Diaspora Global Business Connect Strategy, which will be in execution mode at this Conference.

My brothers and sisters, *'We Are A Nation on a Mission: Jamaica-Diaspora Partnership for Development!'*

As we meet in this Conference, we are reminded that a large number of us are the proud descendants of our fore-parents who were forcibly taken from Africa, and whose ancestral heritage have enriched the societies in which we live.

Having just returned from the continent of Africa, I am even more seized of the global relevance of Jamaica in the world.

Jamaica is revered in Africa, in particular Ethiopia, which I had the honour to visit and to meet with members of the vibrant Jamaican Diaspora from *Shashamane* and other areas in central Ethiopia.

Jamaica must therefore continue to solidify our relationship with Africa, and to explore and engage our Diaspora on the continent.

Our roots run deep in Africa.

Jamaica must therefore continue to solidify our relationship with Africa, and to explore and engage our Diaspora on the continent.

African countries are amongst the fastest growing economies in the world, and it is imperative that we continue to improve our relationship with these countries.

Consequently, and as you may be aware, we recently appointed Mr. Carl Masters as Special Envoy to the African Union at the rank of Ambassador.

My fellow Jamaicans, I know that the issue of a migration policy is very germane to this Conference.

There is an evident need for the development of an appropriate framework to deal with issues such as the portability of disability and other pension payments, labour and mobility, remittances and social protection.

I am pleased to learn that with the support of a number of international agencies, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

will shortly produce an International Development and Migration Policy.

I am also pleased that a Diaspora Policy is in draft stage and will be discussed at this Conference.

Friends, as we continue to celebrate our 50th Anniversary of Independence, we have much for which to be grateful.

Jamaicans in the Diaspora have excelled and made global contributions in every field of endeavour imaginable, from the cultural and creative industries, to law, science, medicine, politics, and Government.

Sport and culture, in particular, have given us a distinct global relevance, and have set us apart on the international stage.

Our sportsmen and women, musicians, artistes and scholars are just some of those who have achieved greatness.



Prime Minister Simpson Miller conversing with State Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Hon. Arnaldo Brown.

During this Conference, we will have the opportunity to examine how we can use sports and culture to advance our development agenda.

I am grateful for the broad inputs of the Diaspora in our efforts to develop a first-class National Sports Policy.

Fellow Jamaicans, we have a vision for the future, and we are pursuing that vision with purpose and confidence.

"Hardships there are, but the sun shineth and the land is fertile and fruitful."

I salute the dedication and commitment of all Jamaicans abroad who continue to work tirelessly, some without reward or recognition, for the betterment of Jamaica.

Fellow Jamaicans, we have a vision for the future, and we are pursuing that vision with purpose and confidence.

YOU, our treasures kept abroad,
YOU, our bold ambassadors;
YOU hold the key to unlock so many of our dreams and aspirations.

We are a great people who have long demonstrated boldness and a pioneering spirit that have caused us to break down barriers and achieve excellence in many spheres.

My brothers and sisters, Join me. Let us walk together, let us work together in peace love and unity.

As National Hero, the Right Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey challenged us, and here I paraphrase:

"Why should I lose hope?

Why should I give up and take a back place in this age of progress?

Remember that you are men and women that God created lords of this creation,

Lift yourselves, take yourselves out of the mire and hitch your hopes to the stars.

Yes, rise as high as the very stars themselves."

Brothers and sisters, let us stay connected as one people shaping the future of our beautiful country and people together.

Let us build Jamaica, sweet Jamaica. The land of our birth.

God bless you all, God bless Jamaica, land we love.

Again - Welcome home!

Have a successful and memorable Conference.



MINISTRY OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
& FOREIGN TRADE



JAMAICA DIASPORA CONFERENCE 2013