

Swearing in Speech September 7, 2020
Kings House

Your Excellencies the Governor General, the Most Honourable Sir Patrick Allen and Lady Allen, Leader of the Opposition Dr. Peter Phillips, Mr. Bruce Golding former Prime Minister and Mrs. Golding, my fellow Jamaicans good afternoon.

There is no certain of victory, so we must work diligently on the people's behalf, and place our faith in God, that He would reward our efforts according to his Judgement and Grace. To God be the glory. For all that we have achieved and all we ever hope to achieve, we give God thanks.

In 2016 you entrusted your hopes and dreams to us and we did not bury them. With industry, enterprise, and partnership we set about fulfilling your dreams and keeping your hope alive. There is much more work to be done. I am humbled and honoured, that the people of Jamaica have seen it fit to give me another opportunity to be the chief steward of their affairs. Thank you for your vote and support, and I commit once again, to using every fibre of my being and all the energy of my spirit for the advancement, fulfilment, and prosperity of the Jamaican people.

The health and economic impact of the COVID19 Pandemic is ubiquitous in our daily life and will be that way for some time to come. We have been very strategic in managing the risks the Pandemic poses, protecting lives, and preserving livelihoods. While spikes in numbers are inevitable in a Pandemic, as we have seen in even the most developed countries, our collective success as a country has led to some complacency in our behaviour. We will put in place the measures necessary to bring this present spike under control and keep you safe, while not unduly affecting your livelihood.

However, as we enter this new phase of the Pandemic the greater emphasis must be placed on the responsible behaviour of individuals; Jamaica does not have the reserves of resources to lockdown our economy for extended periods. We must now all learn how to live with and protect ourselves from the Sars Cov2 virus and the Covid19 disease it causes. We cannot rely on fear, panic and stigma to get temporary compliance, but on the conscious effort on the part of every Jamaican, that as we go about our daily lives, working, worshipping, shopping, and socializing we must follow the established infection prevention and control protocols. These personal measures, coupled with stronger public education, tighter enforcement and prosecution of breaches, and control of non-productive and unnecessary movement and activities will gradually bring the numbers down and relieve the stress on our health system and the exposure of our frontline workers.

I have faith in our Jamaican people that we will quickly develop the understanding and compliance necessary to go about our daily lives in a new normal way.

While the Pandemic has created a crisis, it has also presented an opportunity for us to reconfigure and modernize our economy and society. Our re-election as a government, aside from being decided on a platform of performance, was also decided by the consideration of the electorate that we will be a strong government and effective government to take the necessary actions to see to the emergence of stronger society and economy from the Pandemic. Jamaica will recover stronger and better than before.

With such a large and convincing mandate, the greatest challenge will be to manage internal demands and behaviour of those who form the majority. There will be those who feel that the majority is basis for arrogance, gives license to do as they wish, creates opportunity to pursue their selfish ends and their personal ambition, gives room for complacency, and tolerance for errors.

Those who hold such views would be sadly mistaken and soon separated.

Every member of the government must be an active agent for the stronger recovery of our economy and society. Every member of the government must understand that this mandate is not about them it is about the people, no princes and princesses were elected, you have no divine right or entitlement, we are all servants of the public good.

On the whole, we have built out a good anti-corruption structure through the Integrity Commission and MOCA. They are constrained by the need to complete their legislative framework and expand their investigative and prosecutorial resources. We will ensure this is completed early in this term. The challenge however is not just one of resources and regulation. It is more so, one of will and culture. The will to challenge the culture. It has been clearly demonstrated that my government has acted within the law when matters arise that are of concern to the public interest. NO ONE has been shown any special favours, given any protection, or influence brought to bear on any anticorruption agency or investigation. This is a step in the right direction. However, in addition to investigation and prosecution, we must also seek to prevent the occurrence of acts which weaken public trust and damage the integrity of the government. To this end, I have indicated to the Executive Director of the Integrity Commission that each elected representative and each appointed Minister will participate in sensitization programme to be established by the Integrity Commission, to increase their awareness and understanding of the anti-corruption legislative framework, not just to sensitize them but to ensure they are seized of their duties and understand that this will be an accountable government.

Once we have built the confidence of the public that their resources are not being diverted, that their authority vested in us is not being used to create unfair advantage for others, and there is a sense that all elected officials and public servants act with a high level of integrity, this will unleash a spirit of public support for government and the state, that will make any development plan a success. While this election was conducted in a Pandemic which would have had an impact on voter turnout, we are still very concerned about the low voter turnout that has been a trend over the last three elections. We know that a large number of Jamaicans are not satisfied with the integrity, dignity and efficiency of their state and government. We, therefore, see the strong correlation between the success of our economic and social programme and the trust of the public. We commit to make government of the highest integrity, dignity, and efficiency.

There is no honeymoon period for this government. Already I am back at my desk to continue our recovery plan.

1/ We will maintain and strengthen macro-economic stability - we will build and strengthen the institutions that safeguard sustainability of government finances, low and stable inflation, foreign exchange reserve adequacy and financial sector stability. We will bring operational independence to the Bank of Jamaica and we will implement a Fiscal Council.

2/ We will improve the business climate and invest to improve competitiveness by reforming Customs, develop the national business portal, and establish business incubators. We will diversify our economy to increase resilience, promote innovation, support youth entrepreneurs and explore opportunities within the Green and Blue Economies. We will support the development of coding, animation, film, logistics & fulfillment among other sectors.

3/ We will continue to provide financial support to households and businesses to ensure that together, we recover stronger. We will provide \$500 million in grants for micro and community-based businesses through the Social Development Commission. We will deploy \$1.2 billion in tourism grants to small and medium sized operators in the tourism sector through the EXIM Bank. We will provide \$3 billion in an Agri-Care Support for our farmers and fisherfolk over 3 years. We will deploy \$10 billion in loan guarantees to support micro, small and medium sized businesses.

4/ We will mobilize foreign and domestic investment that improve the delivery of public services or promote innovation while creating jobs. We will launch and complete Public-Private Partnerships for water treatment and storage, sewerage, garbage collection and infrastructure development. We will list state owned enterprises on the Jamaica Stock Exchange giving Jamaicans the opportunity to own Jamaican assets.

5/ We will continue with vigilant and dedicated management of the health response to the COVID-19 pandemic while investing to improve health capacity and infrastructure. We will strengthen laboratory and surveillance systems and focus on community health support and continue to promote healthy lifestyles.

We will undertake major infrastructure upgrades to the following hospitals: Spanish Town, St. Ann's Bay, May Pen, Bustamante Children's Hospital, and UHWI, together with completion of the Cornwall Regional Hospital and the Western Children's Hospital. Simultaneously we will retrofit 110 health facilities across the island with technology that will provide high-speed Internet capacity, modern ICT infrastructure to include laptops and tablets.

6/ We will strengthen the social safety net and increase social equity in the society. We will support access to day care for lower income families. We will embark on comprehensive reform of social security that will consolidate and simplify statutory deductions while creating more convenient means of participation in the National Insurance Scheme and the National Housing Trust for certain category of workers. Our social security reforms will aim to have universal participation in the national insurance scheme and along with other reforms will pave the way for unemployment insurance to become a reality.

7/ We will prioritize early-childhood education and parenting support. We will improve broadband connectivity in public schools and we will expand the tablets in schools initiative starting with procuring over 100,000 for teachers and students and then building beyond that number with creative solutions that focus on access for students in need. We will in public

schools as we develop six new Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) focused high schools that prepare students for careers in STEM fields and a performing art focused high school that prepares students for careers in the performing arts. We will improve access to financing for tertiary education by improving terms offered by the Students' Loan Bureau.

8/ We will ensure that all Jamaicans have access to financial services. We will pursue the use of low-tiered KYC bank accounts to increase the number of Jamaicans who have access to functional bank accounts. We will mandate by law that all lenders be required to include transparent, understandable, and comparable information in their product listings and documentation such that customers can easily choose between financial providers. We will introduce a national digital payment platform that will allow payments to be made seamlessly increasing productivity, efficiency, financial inclusion, and security.

9/ We are committed to closing Jamaica's Digital Divide and to the creation of "Digital Jamaica" where technology is woven into the fabric of business and everyday activities so that it engages and empowers every Jamaican in the context of COVID-19 and beyond. All town centres will be serviced with Free Wi-Fi. In addition we will ensure broadband/Wi-Fi access at our community access points. All public schools will have broadband Wi-Fi/broadband access. We will digitize public sector services. All major public sector services that require applications will be accessible online. We will implement a national identification system where all Jamaicans will have the opportunity for a robust and secure identification that will improve access to public sector services. We will build a national broadband network infrastructure, which is uniformed, future proof, resilient, and managed by an independent public private authority and available to all telecom players in the market to utilize. Network will be appropriately size to manage Jamaica's current and expected internet and ICT demand. This will become the new information highway which will connect and give access to fast and reliable internet to all Jamaicans anywhere in Jamaica.

10/ We will ensure that more Jamaicans must have access to land, housing and shelter. We will achieve 70,000 *affordable home* housing starts with 30% will be reserved for policemen and women, nurses, teachers and civil servants and 10,000 will be allocated for young people (18 to 35) and we will provide them with 100% financing for seeking to purchase these homes. Each year, the NHT will invest a minimum of \$1 billion in Social Housing to include construction and repairs. And, we will issue over 30,000 land titles to Jamaicans who have legitimate claims to land that they have occupied, cultivated and used for generations. Water is life, and I am determined to solve this problem. On the production side, we have developed a plan to bring approximately 100million gallons of water per day into the system involving pumped hydro storage and desalination to cover Clarendon, Kingston St. Andrew, St. Catherine (particularly the hilly sections), and parts of St. Thomas. This will solve once and for all our water shortage problem in our utility areas and increase our resilience.

Jamaica is on the right path. The have given the government a mandate to move with speed and alacrity in fulfilling the great destiny of this country. We will not squander it. We will use it wisely, to build public trust, continue the partnerships for prosperity, to be inclusive and caring for the poor and vulnerable, to be prospecting and enterprising in fulfilling the dreams

and ambition of the youth and make Jamaica the place of choice to live, work, raise families, do business and retire in paradise. God Bless Jamaica Land We Love.