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LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION  
NEW YEAR'S DAY MESSAGE 2020

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## New Year's Greeting

Happy New Year!

As we close out 2020 and embark on 2021, the New Year brings with it a renewed sense of possibility and a time for reflection.

The past year has been a particularly challenging one for Jamaica and the whole World, as we have lived through the crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic and have endured the major economic downturn that has resulted from it.

Over one hundred thousand Jamaicans who were employed this time last year, are now out of a job. Many businesses have had to scale down or even close operations. The virus continues to spread across the land, putting severe pressure on our health systems.

On a personal level, we have had to adjust to maintaining physical distance and wearing masks in public spaces, even as we seek to remain socially and emotionally connected.

It is the true Jamaican spirit of caring and sharing that we must rely on to pull through this crisis. We have seen it among those serving on the front lines of the pandemic – our doctors, nurses and hospital staff. We have seen it among our other essential workers who face danger every day to keep us safe – our firemen, police officers and soldiers.

I thank you for your immeasurable contributions to the betterment of Jamaica and for your service.

And in communities across this land, Jamaicans have banded together in support of one another, each one helping one in the little ways that help to make life more tolerable in these challenging times. This is the spirit of Jamaica and Jamaicans.

Happily, as we enter 2021, there is hope for a brighter tomorrow. The marvels of collaborative modern science have developed several vaccines that offer the chance of bringing this pandemic to an end this year.

For the sceptics among us, it is worth remembering that it is vaccines which have allowed mankind to move beyond serious illnesses like tuberculosis, small pox and polio that used to afflict millions of people around the World every year. In this era of fake news and misinformation, it is important that we listen to credible sources of knowledge, and trust our health professionals.

In 2021, Jamaicans must remain vigilant in holding government accountable and protecting the Constitution and the rule of law. I note a few developments worthy on mention:

- Despite pressure from within and outside Parliament, the Government has not relented on its decision to overturn the convention, followed since 2007, that all sessional committees of the House of Representatives should be chaired by Opposition MPs, which is a backward step that has weakened parliamentary oversight of the Executive.

- Local citizens have had to go to court to challenge the Prime Minister's decision to overrule NEPA's refusal to allow mining in the environmentally sensitive Dry Harbour Mountains.
- And we have recently discovered that the Supreme Court ruling that the recent States of Emergency, and the concept of executive detention, are unconstitutional, is being appealed by the Government.

The Opposition will continue to be vigilant in standing up for the right of the Jamaican people.

We would also like to see 2021 be the year when Jamaica takes the steps of repatriating our sovereignty by constitutional reform to replace the British Monarch with a Jamaican President as our Head of State, and to replace the Privy Council in London with the Caribbean Court of Justice as our final court of appeal. We hope that there can be bipartisan consensus on these fundamental steps forward towards completing our independence. Time come.

As we enter into 2021, let us recommit to our national goals, and work together in achieving them. It is my hope that the coming year will be filled with stories of triumph, hope and joy for all Jamaicans at home and abroad.

From my family to yours, we wish you a Happy New Year!