

**Message from the Leader of the Opposition Mr. Mark Golding, MP for
Labour Day 2023**

Good day Jamaica.

Once again, we pause our regular day to day activities to celebrate Labour Day, the day when we work together in our communities and are reminded of the importance of solidarity and collective action in building a more fair and equal society.

I wish to endorse the theme selected for Labour Day this year - ***"Plant a Tree for Life - Promoting Climate Change Mitigation, Food Security and Road Safety"***. In an era when climate change has emerged as an existential threat to the future of mankind, this theme focuses attention on the urgent need for each and every one of us to take action to counter the effects of climate change and promotes sustainable ways of living and organizing human activity.

We are all aware of the devastating impact that climate change is having on our planet, and Jamaica is no exception. Rising sea levels, more frequent and intense hurricanes, and prolonged droughts are just some of the effects that we are already experiencing.

It is our constitutional right to enjoy a healthy and productive environment, free from the threats of injury or damage from environmental abuse and degradation of our ecological heritage. Protecting that constitutional right is the responsibility of all of us as Jamaicans.

The planting of trees is a simple but effective way to help combat the effects of climate change. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, which is a major greenhouse gas contributing to global warming, and trees in exchange release oxygen into the atmosphere, which is a source of life when we breathe.

Planting trees also has many other benefits. Trees help to improve soil quality, prevent erosion, and provide habitat for wildlife. Trees also provide shade, giving relief from the effects of the hot climate, and reduce energy consumption. Planting fruit trees helps to promote food security providing fresh, nutritious foods.

Jamaica is a country with a rich agricultural heritage, but there is still much work to be done when it comes to food security. In recent years we have become increasingly reliant on imported food, draining us of foreign exchange and leaving us vulnerable to global price fluctuations and supply chain disruptions.

As a nation, we must work together to create an economy in which local farmers and producers can thrive, and in which everyone has access to nutritious and affordable food. This Labour Day, let us make a commitment to supporting local agriculture by planting more trees and expanding community gardens. It will promote greater food security for ourselves and future generations, and it will help to mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing our carbon footprint and protecting our soil.

Food security is not just about ensuring a reliable supply of food, but also about promoting healthy eating habits and reducing food waste. We must educate ourselves and our communities about the importance of a balanced diet, and the ways in which we can reduce food waste through proper planning, better storage and preservation.

As we work towards a cleaner and more environmentally friendly Jamaica, we must also prioritize road safety. Road accidents continue to claim the lives of far too many Jamaicans each year. Road safety is everyone's responsibility. It is therefore our responsibility to make our roads safe for all users, pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. We must redouble our commitment to road safety by obeying traffic laws, respecting pedestrian crossings, and wearing a helmet while cycling or riding a bike. Let us all take responsibility for reducing the number of accidents and fatalities on our roads.

It being Labour Day, it is also appropriate to recall the historic struggle of our workers in Jamaica for justice in the workplace. Despite the many gains over the years, many workers continue to be disadvantaged by unfair practices denying them the hard-won employment rights that should be guaranteed to all Jamaican workers. We are committed to bringing legislation to put an end to those abuses.

I also wish to express solidarity and my sympathy with the many public sector workers who feel disrespected and disadvantaged by the flawed process and inequitable

outcomes of the recent public sector compensation transformation exercise. More must be done to bring balance, fairness and hope to the many public sector employees who have been left feeling disheartened and undervalued by what has taken place.

This Labour Day, let us come together to plant the seeds of a brighter future for Jamaica. Whether we are planting trees, cleaning up our communities, or doing other tasks to make our communities better places to live, let us do so with a spirit of national unity and commitment to building a better, more sustainable Jamaica for all.

I wish you a happy and productive Labour Day.

God bless you and keep you safe.

Mark Golding, MP
Leader of the Opposition