Honourable Minister of State,
Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Heads of International Organisations,
Representatives from the Consular Corps,
Members of the Media,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I welcome you most warmly to this sixteenth staging of Jamaica’s Diplomatic Week. I am delighted that we are joined by an unprecedentedly high number of non-resident Heads of Mission.

I extend a special welcome to the newly appointed resident and non-resident High Commissioners and Ambassadors who have joined us since we last met, including those who, just yesterday, presented credentials to His Excellency the Governor General and, in one instance, to the Honourable Prime Minister.

I am pleased to note that the non-resident Ambassador of Suriname is present here today, complementing the excellent resident Caribbean Community (CARICOM) representation provided by St. Kitts and Nevis and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Jamaica’s foreign policy is based on a number of underlying values and principles, many of which are to be found in the Charter of the United Nations. These include an approach which rejects discrimination in any form and which strives for social and economic equity for all. Jamaica continues to be a firm advocate for the promotion of peace, the peaceful resolution of disputes, respect for multilateralism and adherence to the purposes and norms of international law.
At the same time, we are proud of our solid, unbroken democratic tradition, our strong institutions of state, our commitment to due process and the rule of law, and our stout defence of freedom of expression, including extremely high levels of press freedom. Indeed, in 2013 Jamaica was rated by Reporters without Borders as having the highest level of press freedom in the Western Hemisphere and the 13th highest rank in the world. I believe that this is worth highlighting, as we often fall into the trap of focusing on the negatives, instead of celebrating our achievements and taking pride in the hard-won political and social gains that are the envy of many other countries.

The focus of this year’s Diplomatic Week is on Partnership for Growth. We have chosen this theme to highlight the role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in helping to shape an international environment that is conducive to Jamaica’s growth and development. After all, the primary objective of Jamaica’s foreign policy is to ensure that our role and activities in international affairs complement economic and social development at home and make us more secure as a nation. It is clear, therefore, that our efforts on the domestic front must be supported by our external outreach. In this context, we understand that our partnerships with the countries that you represent and our close collaboration with various regional and international organisations are:

- vital for the implementation of Jamaica’s Growth Inducement Strategy;
- critical to the success of our Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework: 2012 – 2015; and
- Essential if we are to attain the goals and objectives of our overall National Development Plan - Vision 2030 Jamaica.

The global financial and economic crisis of the last six years has demonstrated unequivocally the close nexus between the external environment and our own prospects for inclusive and transformative growth and development.

We are heartened, therefore, that 2014 has started with encouraging an sign of recovery at the global level. A recent study by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) forecasts global economic growth of 2.9 percent in 2014, with growth picking up in both developed and developing countries. ECLAC has found that GDP growth in Latin America and the Caribbean is expected to exceed the global average, rising to a projected 3.3 percent in 2014. As would be expected, growth rates will not be evenly distributed. ECLAC has posited that Jamaica will experience a 1.2 percent increase in growth, compared to a high of 7 percent for some other countries in the Latin American and the Caribbean region. The comparison with other regions would be even more marked. Nonetheless, we are encouraged that, for many of us, after years of near zero growth, we may have finally turned the corner and are on a more upward trajectory.
We intend to sustain this momentum in 2014, by continuing our partnerships with you, the members of the international community and to build on the gains made in 2013 at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

Over the past year, we sought to develop closer ties of friendship, cooperation, trade and investment with the countries of Latin America and Africa. We actively engaged through visits and cooperation programmes with many countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Venezuela, Nigeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Namibia, Mozambique, Botswana and South Africa. We hope to increase our level of interaction in Latin America and Africa, including with Sierra Leone and Zambia.

We also sought to engage more closely with the BRICS countries. To this end, I officially opened and inaugurated the Embassy of Jamaica in Brasilia in June 2013. Our cooperation with Brazil will be further enhanced later this month when we will welcome the Brazilian Foreign Minister on an official visit to Jamaica.

Last November, Jamaica was honoured to receive a State Visit by His Excellency Michel Martelly, President of the Republic of Haiti. That visit facilitated the strengthening of bilateral relations between Jamaica and Haiti through high-level dialogue and increased cooperation in many areas. As a tangible show of support, the Government of Jamaica offered scholarships for Haitian nationals at various educational institutions in Jamaica. I take this opportunity to encourage continued international support for Haiti and for respect for the constitutional and human rights of all Haitians, both at home and in the Diaspora.

We also deepened our relationship with our longstanding and much valued friends in North America- Canada and the United States of America. These countries have continued to give support in respect of financial, security and human rights issues, among others, and the Diaspora links on all sides remain strong and healthy. Similarly, we have deepened our longstanding and valuable relationships with European countries, and particularly with Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the European Union. I must also make mention of the high value placed on the cooperation programmes being initiated with Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden through the framework of CARICOM.

In Asia and the Middle East, our active programmes of cooperation continued with China and Japan, while we enhanced our relationship with Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Israel, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Turkey. We look forward to closer cooperation with countries in the Middle East, including Kuwait where we have established an Embassy. We are also pleased that there has been significant movement at the international level in relation to Iran.
Our cooperation with Russia has remained robust. We look forward to consolidating our relationship in the year ahead, including through a high level visit to Moscow. We have fond memories of the World Championships of Track and Field held in Moscow this past summer. We also wish Russia well as they prepare to host the Winter Olympics in Sochi. We hope that our Bobsled team will perform as well as they did in Lillehammer, Norway in 1994 when they finished 14th and in front of the US and Russian Teams. This was a great Olympic moment.

In the aviation sector, we have improved our connectivity and prospects for tourism through the signing of Air Services Agreements in 2013 with Singapore, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates.

Given the increased air linkages between Jamaica and Eastern Europe, we look forward to closer ties with the countries in that region. In order to facilitate travel and tourism flows from Eastern Europe, we have put in place visa waivers for visitors from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Ukraine. This is in addition to similar arrangements with Colombia, Panama, the Russian Federation and Venezuela.

We are conscious that more attention has to be paid to Eastern Europe, including to Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, and Serbia. We are also open to building on our relationship with Kazakhstan.

We also enjoy excellent relations with Australia and New Zealand and we look forward to the further strengthening of our programmes of cooperation with these two countries.

Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our partnerships for growth have also been nurtured with regional and international institutions.

It is important to state here that the Government of Jamaica is firmly committed to regional integration, both within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and in the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). These two integration movements are excellent examples of partnerships for growth and development. We do recognize, however, that integration is not without its challenges or its naysayers. But we say; there is no turning back.

We believe that regional integration must be seen as an ongoing process and not a single event.
Jamaica is unequivocal in its support for the renewal of CARICOM. We have been working actively with other CARICOM Member States to identify priority areas and initiatives for enhancing the effectiveness of the Secretariat and Community.

The increasing maturity of our integration movement was amply demonstrated last year by the landmark ruling of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) in the case between Jamaican national, Shanique Myrie and the State of Barbados. That ruling, which was in Miss Myrie’s favour, has implications for the free movement of Caribbean nationals within the Community. We hope that the ruling will lead to the strengthening of the integration movement.

We have also stepped up the level of bilateral engagement within CARICOM. We initiated consultations between Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, on free movement issues in the context of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME). We agreed to several areas of cooperation for follow-up and collaboration. Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago will hold further consultations in Port-of-Spain on these and other matters in the first quarter of this year.

I have just returned from the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which was held in Havana, Cuba from 28th to 29th January 2014. The CELAC Summit adopted a Proclamation by virtue of which the 33 member nations of the Caribbean and Latin America have agreed to make our region a zone of peace. The Proclamation reaffirms the right to peace and the culture of peace which exists in the region, and excludes the use of force and non-legitimate means of defence, such as weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons. By extension, we have also agreed to continue promoting nuclear disarmament as a priority objective to foster the strengthening of confidence among nations.

I commend the Government of Cuba for its superb hosting of the meeting and its stewardship of CELAC over the past year. Costa Rica, the incoming President, can be assured of Jamaica’s firm support and cooperation as the body seeks to strengthen its position regionally and globally.

The work of the Association of Caribbean States continues to be highly relevant and we look forward to the ACS Summit to be held shortly in Mexico.

Jamaica continues to support the strengthening of the multilateral process, particularly in the creation of a more enabling environment to protect our security and enhance prospects for sustained economic and social development.
We remained active within the Organisation of American States, particularly in matters related to human rights, security and justice, the promotion of integrated development, and the peaceful settlement of disputes through respect for International Law; and within the Commonwealth where Jamaica supported the adoption of the Commonwealth Charter which embodies the values and aspirations in relation to the Commonwealth and its peoples.

I led Jamaica’s delegation to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka in November 2013 which was held under the theme “Growth with Equity: Inclusive Development”. This allowed Commonwealth countries to further deliberate on a number of issues affecting equitable growth.

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Jamaica provides a coherent, coordinated and country-driven response to our technical assistance needs. We commend the work of the United Nations Country team under the leadership of the Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme in executing this programme.

As part of our commitment to human rights and respect for international law, we defended our Reports to the United Nations Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, and the Committee on Racial Discrimination in May and August 2013, respectively. These reports were well received and we have had useful dialogue in the follow-up. We are currently preparing our reports in respect of the Universal Peer Review for the Human Rights Council. We continue to welcome innovations which would assist countries in dealing with our reporting obligations.

Our partnerships have also borne fruit through a number of successful candidatures.

Jamaica was extremely pleased to have been elected as a Vice-Chair of the United Nations World Tourism Organization in August 2013. We were also elected to membership of the UNESCO World Heritage Council and to the Executive Council of the International Maritime Organisation. I thank all those countries which supported us in these elections.

I take this opportunity to remind that Jamaica will be putting forward the candidature of Judge Patrick Robinson for election to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at elections to take place this November. Judge Robinson has already received CARICOM endorsement. CARICOM has not served on the ICJ for some time and the support of your countries for this candidature will be highly appreciated. I thank all those countries which have already indicated their support.
Jamaica is proud of the role it has played in promoting the construction of a Permanent Memorial in commemoration of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade at United Nations Headquarters in New York. This Memorial is of particular importance to us, given our historical context. I thank all those countries which have made generous contributions to the Trust Fund for the Permanent Memorial and encourage those which have not yet done so to make a donation in order to ensure the sustainability of this initiative.

Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our partnerships in the area of security are among the most vital ones we have. Jamaica was among the first countries to sign the historic Arms Trade Treaty in June 2013. As a country gravely affected by violence and insecurity caused by small arms and light weapons, none of which are produced locally, we look forward to the effective implementation of this Treaty. We are currently taking steps to ratify the Treaty so as to allow for its early entry into force.

Jamaica takes very seriously its multilateral obligations in relation to Terrorism. The enactment of the Terrorism Prevention (Amendment) Act 2013 has allowed us to meet important obligations to the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) with regard to money laundering and terrorism financing and assisted national efforts to qualify for membership in important international bodies relevant to international financial intelligence.

We were also able to enact the United Nations Security Council Resolutions Implementation Act 2013. This Act allows Jamaica to implement all non-terrorism United Nations Security Council resolutions, especially those dealing with weapons of mass destruction and preventing the financing of those weapons. This allows the country to meet commitments to the UN Security Council and the CFATF.

In terms of economic growth, Jamaica continues to advocate for the elaboration of a development agenda that embraces the wide range of needs and specific circumstances of Middle Income Countries (MICs), and which allows countries to evaluate their development needs, assess and prioritise their challenges and outline a programme in line with their own national growth and development agenda. There is an urgent need to identify additional external sources of financing for middle income countries. We hope that, in their deliberations, the G20 will continue to look at the constraints confronting Middle Income Countries. We look forward to closer engagement with Australia, the incoming chair of the G20, on these and other issues.
The vulnerabilities experienced by Small Island Developing States, such as Jamaica, further erode our potential for growth and development. This is an area of concern which requires urgent attention and an enhanced partnership with the international community. The Third United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to be held in September in 2014, in Samoa, with an emphasis on partnerships and how these can be harnessed for the full benefits of SIDS, will be important for placing the concerns of SIDS squarely on the international agenda. Let us not lose sight of the fact that SIDS comprise nearly one half of the membership of the international community. It is therefore time for their concerns to be factored into international deliberations, including in the fashioning of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Jamaica will be focusing on the issue of Small States on many fronts, including within the Commonwealth where I am a member of the Ministerial Open-Ended Group on Small States. We also intend to participate actively in the Conference in Samoa and, in preparation for this, we were pleased to have collaborated with the UNDP and other UN entities in hosting in July 2013, the Caribbean regional preparatory meeting, for the Third SIDS Conference which resulted in the Kingston Outcome Declaration. This was an input for the SIDS Interregional meeting held in August 2013 in Barbados.

Another area of focus is natural disasters and attention to climate change. This has been re-energised by the involvement of Jamaica and the Caribbean in the Latin American and Caribbean regional platform for the coordination of humanitarian assistance, following on Jamaica’s hosting of the Sixth Regional Meeting on International Mechanisms for Humanitarian Assistance (MIAH), in October 2013. Baroness Amos, the UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs, joined us on that occasion.

The damage experienced by the Eastern Caribbean countries of Dominica, St. Lucia and St. Vincent & the Grenadines as a result of flooding and heavy rainfall in December 2013 has revealed once again the susceptibility of the Caribbean region as a whole to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change. The catastrophic event resulted in loss of life and major infrastructural damage estimated at over $100 million United States Dollars in St. Vincent and the Grenadines alone. The characterisation of these countries as upper middle income and the constraints this poses on access to international resources, reinforces the need for small developing countries to develop their resilience to natural disasters and to adapt to the deleterious effects of climate change.

As we seek to mitigate the effects of climate change, Jamaica’s new energy policy is centred on diversification of the energy sector and the use of renewable energy aimed at ensuring long term energy security and environmental protection. Diversification has included a range of energy options, including wind, solar, biomass and ethanol. Consideration has also been given to the use of liquefied natural gas (LNG), once affordable sources are identified. We are, however, conscious of the need to provide a cheaper and more reliable energy supply to
our citizens. In this regard, Jamaica has identified Energy World International Limited (EWI) as the most suitable company to construct a 360 MW additional base load capacity generating plant, which should significantly reduce the cost of electricity and improve our levels of productivity and competitiveness. EWI should begin construction of the plant this year, in partnership with the Jamaica Public Service Company (JPS), for completion within 24 months.

As host country of the International Seabed Authority, Jamaica is pleased that this year marks the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of the Authority in Kingston. The Authority has completed a number of regulations governing the exploration of the deep seabed and is about to embark on the process that will allow for active exploitation. It is imperative that increased partnerships are forged which would allow small developing countries to benefit from the "common heritage of mankind". I encourage those countries already actively involved in the exploration of the deep seabed to consider ways in which small developing countries, interested in exploration and exploitation, can access the resources of the deep seabed. Jamaica is certainly open to such opportunities.

As a responsible member of the international community, Jamaica is concerned that grave humanitarian crises are continuing in Syria, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These are having an adverse impact on so many, particularly women and children. We are supportive of the work being conducted at the international level to address these crises, including through the Geneva Process in respect of Syria. We remain hopeful that there will be movement towards resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on a negotiated settlement and a two State solution.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We invite you to partner with us in the areas of trade and investment.

In the year ahead, Jamaica will be embarking on an exciting phase of its development with the establishment of the Logistics Hub. National growth targets will be consolidated through projects at both the bilateral and multilateral levels intended to stimulate trade, generate investment and strengthen the policy and legal framework to allow for the effective implementation of projects. We welcome your interest. There is great investment potential for your countries in the build-out of the Hub.

The revision of Jamaica’s Foreign Trade Policy remains a priority and will be completed in the coming months. I place on record appreciation for the assistance received from the EU and the IDB. The ultimate goal of the Revised Trade Policy is to address existing challenges relating to growth, productivity and competitiveness; and to provide
a policy framework to increase production, expand exports, and generate job creation and economic growth. The Revised Trade Policy will also frame Jamaica’s approach to the consolidation of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME); CARICOM agreements negotiated with third countries; the ACP/EU; and the WTO.

As part of our growth strategy, Jamaica has to position itself to take full advantage of the market access available to us at the bilateral, regional and international levels. The private sector is a critical player in this process. Together, we have to make expanding trade in goods and services a reality. For this reason, I have increased the level of consultations and engagement with the Jamaican private sector on trade policy and implementation, and in overseas missions to target business opportunities and investments. Discussions are being held on how to increase the participation of the private sector in the work of CARICOM, specifically the Council on Trade and Economic Development (COTED). Jamaica strongly supports the view that the private sector should have a seat at the table at COTED meetings, bearing in mind the critical role they have played and continue to play in regional integration.

The first five year review of the CARIFORUM/EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) is now due. Both CARIFORUM and the EU regard this review as an important exercise for the more full and effective utilisation of the Agreement. We express our appreciation to the EU for its continued support at the national level which has resulted in Euro 7 million for budgetary support and Euro 9.2 million for the strategy for the adaptation of the sugar industry.

We also express our appreciation to the USA for its continuing support in trade. In May 2013, CARICOM and the USA signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement during the visit of Vice President Joseph Biden to the region. We remain actively engaged in the CARICOM-Canada negotiations.

In trade negotiations, we continue to be concerned that liberalisation should not take place in such a manner as to cause serious economic and social dislocation in Jamaica and other countries in CARICOM.

Let me turn now more specifically to the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC9) held recently in Bali, Indonesia. There was a successful outcome to MC9 as Members adopted a ‘Bali Package’ comprising aspects of Agriculture and Development, including issues relating to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), as well as a landmark agreement on Trade Facilitation. This is the first multilateral agreement since the establishment of the WTO in 1995.

Both developed and developing countries fought hard to secure a meaningful outcome in Bali that would provide a boost to the WTO and reinvigorate the Doha Round. In our capacity as Coordinator of the African, Caribbean and
Pacific (ACP) Group of States at the WTO, Jamaica played an instrumental role during the preparatory process in Geneva and at the Conference in Bali, in bridging differing views among WTO members, while defending the interests of Jamaica and other ACP countries. We have received commendations from all quarters for our constructive role in the process. It is now critical that all WTO Members seek to capitalise on the success in Bali, particularly as we turn our attention to developing a post-Bali work programme aimed at addressing the outstanding issues relating to the Doha Round.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

An essential component of our partnership for growth is with the Jamaican Diaspora.

The Fifth Biennial Jamaican Diaspora Conference in June 2013 was highly successful. Over 1500 delegates attended. There were addresses by two international speakers from India and Israel. The Ministry will be placing increased emphasis on strengthening linkages with the Jamaican Diaspora to encourage their participation in the process of nation building, including through investment flows and the provision of skills. Integral to this is the development of a Diaspora Policy. Work is far advanced on this policy which will complement the National Policy on International Migration and Development. This will assist in Jamaica's efforts to advance its political, trade and economic interests while protecting and promoting the rights of all Jamaicans, at home and abroad.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we continue on the journey of national development it is clear that the establishment and consolidation of international partnerships will be critical. We are highly appreciative of the cooperation we share at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. As we look to a future of sustained growth and sustainable development, I invite you to continue to work with us in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, in a spirit of partnership.

I thank you.