

**STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE OLIVIA GRANGE, CD, MP
MINISTER OF CULTURE, GENDER, ENTERTAINMENT & SPORT**

SALUTE TO RIO AMBASSADORS

**HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2016**

I will now present to you an outline of the programme for the planned tribute to our RIO ambassadors in celebration of Jamaica's achievement at the Summer Olympics and Paralympics Games in August.

The well anticipated events are scheduled for this weekend, Friday, October 14, 2016 through to Sunday October 16, 2016 and of course the culmination of National Heritage Week with the Celebration of National Heroes Day Monday, October 17, 2016.

Thursday, October 13, 2016

Those athletes that reside overseas will be arriving in Jamaica.

Friday, October 14, 2016

Prime Minister's Reception for the Rio Delegation - hosted by the Most Honourable Prime Minister on the Lawns of Jamaica House.

Saturday, October 15, 2016

The Rio Sports Gala and Awards Ceremony at the National Indoor Sports Centre on Saturday, October 15, 2016, beginning at 7:30 pm.

Sunday, October 16, 2016

The JN 5K Run/Walk – This is a fundraiser for Charities in Western Jamaica, sponsored by the JN Group and supported by the Usain Bolt Foundation.

The Western Jamaica Reception at the luxurious Braco Melia Hotel on Sunday October 16 beginning at 7:00pm. This is an opportunity for Western Jamaica to salute the delegation.

A special planning committee was convened to discuss how best to demonstrate in tangible ways our gratitude to our athletes and their management team.

The Awards – we looked at other countries and we tried our best within our limited resources to provide a monetary reward in keeping with the existing policy. The reward system is as follows:

Gold Medal – the equivalent of US\$10,000

Silver – the equivalent of US\$7,500

Bronze – the equivalent of US\$5,000

Relay Gold – the equivalent of US\$6,000 shared by all six members of the relay

Relay Silver – the equivalent of US\$ 4000

Relay Bronze – the equivalent of US\$ 3,500

Finalist (non-medalist) – the equivalent US\$3,500

Non-Finalist – the equivalent of US\$2500

Managers and officials – the equivalent of US\$1000

Commissioning of Statues to be placed in the National Stadium - Statue Park as a part of a wider planned development of the Stadium complex, which of course includes the National Sport Museum.

This will be done on a phased basis over a period of two (2) years. The Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport (MCGES) will commission four (4) statues over the next two (2) years for the following athletes: Usain Bolt, Veronica Campbell-Brown, Shelly Ann Fraser Pryce and Asafa Powell.

The first two (2) statues -Usain and Shelly Ann will be completed in time for the Jamaica 55 independence celebrations and the other two (2): Veronica Campbell Brown and Asafa Powell for the following year.

There are other ideas that have been posited however, at this time these are still in proposal format and will need to be reviewed prior to any announcement.

Colleagues, I am cognizant of the fact that there are competing opinions and perspectives on this matter of how best to recognize and reward our athletes and I wish to say a few words which could through some light on the issue.

Supporting and ensuring the welfare of our athletes – elite and otherwise is and always will be a top policy priority.

To those who think that we do not do enough. The fact is that the government, through successive administrations, has spent billions of dollars on sports development. The major focus of Government's sports development thrust is 'getting] them there' - enabling our sportspeople to achieve global success through investment in national, community and school sport, coaching, facilities and welfare.

Mr Speaker, whilst we may not contribute to every aspect of our athlete's day to day existence, kindly allow me to expand briefly on some of the areas where the Government has contributed directly to the development of sport at all levels. For obvious reasons, the Ministry will not give much details about the welfare programme which provides housing and other accommodation, monthly stipends and other forms of support to our sportspeople. For the Rio games, the Ministry, through the Sports Development Foundation, gave monthly grants to several members of the Jamaica team between October 2015 and July 2016 to help with expenses as they prepared to take on the world.

True to its commitment to safeguard the well-being of athletes, the Ministry of Sport has also implemented the Jamaica Athletes' Insurance Plan, in keeping with the National Sport Policy. At the time of writing, more than 1,200 of our sportspeople, across the various disciplines, are covered under the Plan. The Ministry also makes special provision for assistance with sport injuries.

In addition, the Ministry provides monthly subventions to each of the 43 registered National Sports Associations to help run their development programmes and to prepare national teams for various competitions. This year, the subventions will total J\$209 million.

We may not do enough and we can always do more but within the confines of our limited resources it is abundantly clear that we are trying.

To those who think that we are doing too much. Think of the pride that all Jamaicans shared every time one of our athletes won a Gold, a Silver or a Bronze medal.

Think of the pride each time the Jamaican anthem played and the Black, Green and Gold flag was raised to the skies and transmitted to millions of television sets around the world. Think of the noise we all made at Half Way Tree Square each time a Jamaican athlete won a race. Think of the international news and sports teams who came to Jamaica and filmed us celebrating, sending our images to the world and inspiring millions to come and visit the country that was making such wonderful history. Our athletes' outstanding and seminal performances on the world stage are an integral component of our signature Brand Jamaica and this is what many of us can and do leverage in order to market and sell our goods and services. And it is not just Jamaicans who are able to profit from this Brand. NBC reported that its viewership went up to 35 million for the 100m race for men.

I then ask all of us to consider if the cost of the programme we have put together to thank them for all this is not reasonable, considering the great gift our athletes have given us without being asked

or paid, merely for the personal pride they each have taken to carry our flag and try to win Gold for Jamaica.

Colleagues, I also want to highlight that the cash rewards that are being given to our athletes are the same in US Dollars that were given our athletes after the London Olympics. It's just that the devaluation of the Jamaican Dollar increases the numbers when converted.

Wealthy nations like Britain gave their athletes expensive cars and sporting equipment as Thanks. Jamaica is a developing country, but we have made every effort to ensure that we are able to say Thanks for every one of the 11 Gold medals our country won with pride.

Again, I invite all Jamaicans to join us live on television and on the internet this Heroes Weekend as we thank our heroic Athletes for a job well done.