

REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE FREDERICK A. MITCHELL, JR.
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE OF JAMAICA

Colleague Ministers, Members of the Senate and House of Assembly, Members of the Diplomatic Corps and other distinguished Government Officials and Guests, Mr. Patrick Hanlan, members and friends of the Hummingbirds Association, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for joining us today as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of an independent Jamaica. Not only is Jamaica our older sibling in the Caribbean and Commonwealth families, but the bonds between Jamaica and an independent Bahamas stretch back to 1973, the year of our own independence. These contemporary links, however, cannot overshadow those stretching well into the nineteenth century, indeed.

With these links comes a significant contribution to the international and domestic governance of a modern Bahamas. Sir Lynden Pindling's father was a Jamaican émigré, who came to our shores and joined the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

Our newly-appointed Ambassador-designate to CARICOM and High Commissioner-designate to Jamaica, His Excellency Picewell Forbes, was

educated at the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies, excelling both in his studies and student government, becoming the first Bahamian elected President of the Students' Guild. This formative experience, no doubt, played a key role in his decision to represent the Bahamian people in the House of Assembly, which in turn facilitated his being chosen to represent The Bahamas at the highest diplomatic level.

We hope to continue to forge more ties with the people of Jamaica through the establishment of a Bahamas Consulate in Kingston, both to serve Bahamian interests in Jamaica and better foster and grow this essential bilateral relationship.

The theme "A Nation on a Mission" is especially applicable for our two countries this year. In becoming the first Commonwealth Caribbean nation to achieve independence from Great Britain, Jamaica has been the vanguard of former British colonies on the march to self-determination, self-rule and independence. And in this regard, it is fitting to note that the first political party in The Bahamas, the Progressive Liberal Party, was formed in 1953 after Mr. William Cartwright and other progressive-thinking Bahamians visited Jamaica and obtained valuable lessons and insight from the political leaders in our sister country.

The recent election of a female Head of Government in Jamaica underlines the theme, “A Nation on a Mission,” and displays the political maturity of Jamaican society and the respect commanded by women in Jamaica; and the world has taken note.

The Bahamas, similarly, is “A Nation on a Mission” to increase foreign direct investment, prepare our youth and professionals to be globally competitive, and to reform our internal systems to promote equality and sustainability. While facing the challenges of national development, we hope to advance to become as world-renowned as Jamaica in terms of music, culture, academia and sports, as well as domestic and international governance.

The way forward as independent nations has not been easy for our two countries. Now, more than ever, Caribbean States must come together, much like the Jamaican motto: “Out of Many, One People.” From the halls of the United Nations to athletics tracks around the world, Jamaica can find a friend in The Bahamas. Even as the world comes together to celebrate the joy of sports at the Olympics, Bahamian and Jamaican athletes compete side by side for the honour of representing the Caribbean on the podium, for our common interest lies in regional advancement.

Issues of climate change and natural disaster risk reduction, aid and bolstering the economic pillars of our economies continue to dominate political discourse. However, I am confident that through dialogue and cooperation, we can learn from each other, as these new challenges creep ever closer, and overcome them as stronger, wiser nations.

As the first nation in the English-speaking Caribbean to achieve this milestone of fifty successful years of independence, it is my hope that Jamaica continues to be a “Nation on a Mission.”

May her beacon of regional and global leadership shine from the peaks of the Blue Mountains, and may her Government continue to chart a course toward the good of all Jamaicans everywhere.

I wish to express my most heartfelt congratulations to His Excellency, the Most Honourable Sir Patrick Allen, the Most Honourable Portia Simpson-Miller and the Government and People of Jamaica on the attainment of a Golden Anniversary of independence. May God bless you, and may God bless Jamaica.