

Remarks by Fred Mitchell MP

Minister of Foreign Affairs

On Independence of Jamaica

BFM, Carmichael Rd, N P

The Bahamas

I am pleased to be able to join you and to wish you a happy independence day. Jamaica is our sister Caricom country and neighbour and I believe that as kindred spirits in the fight for freedom and democracy, it is right and just to be here this afternoon.

I want to congratulate the Humming Birds and the Jamaican Honorary Consul for their stellar work in organizing these celebrations every year. It is important for the Diaspora of a nation to come together to celebrate and mark their identity in their adopted country.

It has been an interesting year for your country and ours, both of us challenged by the vicissitudes of the world economy, and strangled on every side by the winds of change.

I was recently with the Prime Minister of our own country Perry Christie at the Heads of Government meeting in Antigua and Barbuda and had the opportunity to hear the Prime Minister of Jamaica speak eloquently about how she spoke to Pastors in Jamaica who were organizing a public demonstration about the fact that she was Prime Minister of all

Jamaicans and we must be careful in our public tones to be sure that we encourage peace amongst all people and demonize none.

It was quite a moving testament to the values which your country espouses. We are called upon in this generation to expand the boundaries of freedom for all people.

This is particularly the case since we have all come out of a slave past and the freedom which we have today was purchased by the blood sweat and tears of so many people. We remember your independence and freedom today was made possible because of those who fought for the emancipation of the slaves which freedom we also celebrate this weekend.

Let us also remember the price which the people of Haiti paid by establishing the first black free republic in this hemisphere, a price for which they are still paying today.

Jamaica has also been challenged by the economy. I know that my friend the Honourable Peter Philips has been involved in many long and difficult discussions with the International Monetary Fund about Jamaica's debt situation and the rebuilding of its economy. I have no doubt that whatever happens your country will overcome.

The way I see it, life goes in cycles. You have only to recall the story of Joseph who interpreted the dream of Pharaoh, as written in the book of Genesis. He tells Pharaoh that it foretells seven years of leanness and seven years of plenty. In order to get through the lean years, we have to

save up during the years of plenty. Translation for me is that life is a cycle and that one day you are in good times and the next day you are in bad times. But what we have to do is to keep on keeping on.

You know of the historic ties between our countries: you bequeathed to us our first Prime Minister Lynden Pindling. There is significant Jamaican investment in The Bahamas in Sandals and in Breezes and Bayroc. There is significant travel between the countries and we also know that most of the doctors in this country are trained in Jamaica. So there is much that binds us and very little that divides us.

What I then want to speak to is those things that unite us, the formal ties the personal ties. We are sister Caricom nations. We work together across the world for freedom and justice and for the economic justice of small island developing states.

Over the next year, we shall continue to work together.

So my friends, brothers and sisters, on behalf of the Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas, I wish to extend to you all a happy independence day. May God continue to bless our two nations?