

Address by the Most Hon. P. J. Patterson Q.C., M.P.
Prime Minister
at Half Moon's 50th Anniversary Dinner
Half Moon, Montego Bay
September 30, 2004

(Preamble)

I am very pleased to be with you today, because Half Moon's 50th Anniversary is another positive sign for Jamaica in general and for our hospitality industry in particular.

Since this resort opened its doors in 1954, it has been unwavering in its commitment to provide only the finest services and facilities for its guests, thereby promoting and strengthening Jamaica's reputation as a premium tourism destination.

And nobody knows better than those involved in tourism that excellence is only par for the course in this fiercely competitive globalized world we now live in.

We also know that the most important input of any organization is its human resource...and for service organizations such as Half Moon, where person-to-person interaction is of profound significance, our human resources become even more vital assets.

I therefore want to congratulate all members of the Half Moon Team for their professionalism and dedication to excellence that are worthy of emulation throughout the hospitality industry as well as by all other sectors.

Indeed, it is this resort's focus on guest satisfaction that has made Half Moon so tremendously successful...and it is your constant effort at improving your facilities and your services that sets you apart from other properties.

Half Moon is “living proof” that it is those enterprises that are dynamic, flexible and innovative that will find opportunity in this new era of globalization which is accompanied by heightened competitiveness in all markets.

Half Moon’s confidence in Jamaica and in the bright future of our hospitality industry is evidenced by the valuable investments being made in this resort:

- Starting with 17 cottages and 30 breakfront rooms fifty years ago, this resort now boasts 22 cottages, 32 Royal Villas and 419 rooms;
- You recently refurbished the resort’s clubhouse;
- And have created a custom-built teaching facility for the David Leadbetter Golf Academy – the only one of its kind in the Caribbean;
- The Half Moon Shopping Village has been re-engineered to accommodate larger outdoor functions;
- and the resort has invested in a new waste water treatment plant, among other things.

Your recent investment of over US\$8 million gives credence to Half Moon's stated commitment to maintaining its status as the most complete Caribbean resort.

Half Moon has thrived in the face of intense competition precisely because you have been quick to respond to the needs of the niche markets you target.

It is therefore hardly surprising that this splendid resort is getting most of the major regional conferences even as it is growing its business with incentive groups and attracting more weddings, anniversaries and family reunions.

And Half Moon's success is not only measured by the fact that it is attracting more guests and winning more international awards, but also by the fact that the resort provides employment for some 700 Jamaicans and that it contributes significantly to other sectors of the economy by purchasing millions of dollars worth of goods from our

farmers and our local manufacturers each year and in employing local talent to entertain visitors.

It is these linkages with other sectors of the economy makes Half Moon's success all of Jamaica's success. It is these linkages that tourism has with agriculture, manufacturing and entertainment that make our hospitality industry the engine of growth for the entire economy.

Spreading the industry's benefits means deepening and widening these linkages between tourism and Jamaica's productive sector. The strategic alliance of tourism with industry, agriculture and entertainment can form a solid foundation for the nation's economic prosperity.

My government is intent on ensuring that the policies and mechanisms are in place so that we can be efficient in promoting this alliance and facilitating those persons who invest in Jamaica.

We want to do this, because profitable enterprises stimulate economic growth that can lead to increased employment and a better standard of living for all our people.

And it is the bold, innovative entrepreneurs like those at the helm of Half Moon, and all members of the team, who are ensuring that our tourist industry continues to record growth.

We have full confidence that the growth will continue. Hurricane Ivan has passed and while we empathise with those who have suffered loss and damage as a result of that storm's near miss, we note that the country and our hospitality industry has been spared the worst.

We are blessed with six resort areas, four of which are up and running. Those areas are: this "friendly city" Montego Bay, Ocho Rios/Runaway Bay, Port Antonio and Kingston.

The other two areas are the South Coast and Negril. Negril has two distinct areas, the Seven-Mile Beach and the West End. Properties along the beach experienced varying levels of damage but those who fared worst have almost completed their cleanup and repairs. Some are already welcoming guests and all will be open for business by the start of October.

The South Coast and that section of Negril on the cliff, known as the West End, suffered the greatest damage but our partners in those areas are rebuilding and expect to be fully open for business in time for the Winter Tourist Season.

Cruise shipping is going full speed ahead and we were welcoming cruise ships and thousands of passengers in both Montego Bay and Ocho Rios only a few days after Ivan passed.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all involved in tourism, especially our proud tourism workers, for doing

everything possible to ensure that our visitors who were on island during the hurricane, were safe and well taken care of. Today, our tourist industry is in the forefront of our economic recovery efforts...and I thank you all.

It is this willingness to "go the extra mile", as you here at Half Moon are doing, that have enabled Jamaica's tourist industry to compete successfully in the world travel market.

Some people may say we are a third world country, but what I know for sure is that here at Half Moon we have first-world professionals working in a first-world industry. Indeed, the reason that we boast a premium tourism product today is that the industry learnt from early that its competition was not only the other Caribbean destinations, but the entire world – including the first world.

In closing, I want to congratulate and thank Half Moon for continuing to show confidence in Jamaica. Your expansion programme, coupled with your linkages with our farmers,

manufacturers and other local companies is helping to stimulate growth in the economy.

At the same time, your sound business practices and responsiveness to the needs of your customers are setting an excellent example for all enterprises, not only those in tourism.

I therefore wish for Half moon another fifty years, at least, of vibrant, successful partnership with Jamaica's tourist industry.

Thank you for proving that when we work as one team, working toward a common goal, we can create prosperity for Jamaica.

I wish you all, continued success.

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