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**ADDRESS BY  
MOST HON. P.J. PATTERSON, ON, QC, PC, MP  
PRIME MINISTER  
AT GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY FOR  
IBEROSTAR RESORT AND SPA, MONTEGO BAY  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2004**

Salutations.

(In Spanish)

(It is a great pleasure to be here this afternoon. I extend a warm and special welcome to our partners from Grupo Iberostar on this very important occasion – the groundbreaking for Iberostar Resort and Spa, Rose Hall.)

Let me repeat: It is a great pleasure to be here this afternoon. I extend a warm and very special welcome to our partners from Grupo Iberostar on this very important occasion – the groundbreaking for Iberostar Rose Hall Resort and Spa.

I have a very special interest in this development. It represents a significant milestone in the successful implementation of our strategic objectives for the growth of our tourism industry.

To an audience such as this, I need not stress the industry's great importance to Jamaica. We are blessed with an island of extraordinary beauty, hospitable people and a vibrant and unique culture. We have set a course designed to ensure that we capitalise on those assets and the industry's tremendous potential for increasing foreign exchange earnings, for employment creation, and development of linkage sectors.

In identifying our objectives in our Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development, we took into account the product life cycle of tourism, which experience worldwide has shown: namely, that after an initial infant stage, the industry tends to accelerate rapidly before tailing off during the mature stage.

Jamaica proved to be no exception to this pattern and when we reached the mature stage in the 1990s, we began to see the predictable lower rates of growth. We also had to face the reality that some of the accommodation and sections of our resort centres established in the 70s and 80s were in need of renewal and modernization if our Tourism industry was to successfully enter a new growth phase.

That is precisely what we set out to do. We have made remarkable progress.

The Master Plan for Tourism envisages an increase in our accommodation by some 12,000 rooms. We decided that our best course was to concentrate new rooms in Negril, Montego Bay and Ocho Rios. After considering all the factors, we set a target of 3,000 rooms for the Montego Bay area which has a rightful claim to be acknowledged as Jamaica's tourism capital.

You can imagine our delight when we received an expression of interest from an organization with the prestige and the proven track record of Grupo Iberostar. The declared policy of the Group is to achieve their own business goals with an "emphasis on innovation in the quality of its products and services, with maximum respect for the environment a firm commitment to sustainable growth".

That was music to our ears.

Senor Fluxa has given you full information on Iberostar and their plans for their Jamaican resort. They fit admirably with the overall concept for the Cinnamon Hill Integrated Resort Development here in Rose Hall.

We just broke ground for the first phase of this project which will see the building of some 1,000 of the 3,000 rooms which is our target for the Montego Bay area. That this project is on stream so quickly is indeed very gratifying. From time to time, I helped to smooth out some of the bumps along the road and now we have arrived at this satisfactory stage of our journey. I believe John Rollins is jumping for joy.

Recently, I raised the subject of taking advantage of Montego Bay's worldwide recognition and its international travel orientation which makes it well placed to become an international business centre.

The city now has first-world infrastructure in place.

This includes:

The Air Jamaica hub at the Donald Sangster Airport which provides easy connections to destinations in the Caribbean, Europe and North America. It is ideal for connections to Central and South America.

The Port Authority has informed me that agreement has been reached with the cruise lines for the expansion of the Port. The Board has already given the go-ahead to its team of engineers to begin the design work. The Authority has received an offer of US\$20 million towards the funding.

Construction of Phase I of the North Coast Highway is complete and Phase II is far advanced. The Alice Eldemire-Howard Cooke Roadway has served to end congestion from the West.

We recently broke ground for an ultra-modern shopping plaza here in Rose Hall.

Working under the umbrella of JAMPRO, the Industry Advisory Council, comprising of legal experts, bankers, accountants, medical professionals and people involved in educational services, is currently conducting a professional services survey to assess the core human resources already available. They are also seeking to determine what other critical professional services we would require to augment the existing resources to make Montego Bay sufficiently competitive and attractive. We are designing the strategy and framework, including legislative and other requirements to create the international business centre I contemplate.

The construction of this new Iberostar Resort and Spa will enhance the facilities which Montego Bay will have to offer to the increased numbers of vacationers and business travelers which these new developments will no doubt attract.

There is one other aspect of our Tourism development strategy I wish to address briefly this afternoon. I refer to the preparation of a skilled workforce to enable us to take advantage of the tremendous employment opportunities that this and other ongoing projects present.

I have charged HEART/NTA to prepare a 21st Century workforce - a critical need if we are to forge a competitive advantage for our economy in industries such as tourism.

This is a part of our integrated national development as our economy is transformed from a primary agricultural economy to a services economy. In order to compete in the global economy, we must depend more on brain and less on brawn. So we are seeking, through a comprehensive human resources training programme, to equip our people to perform jobs in the knowledge/services economy. Here, I make special mention of the need for language training to enable us to meet the needs of the diverse market that both our expanded tourism industry and an international service environment will require.

HEART is playing a pivotal role in the preparation of over 16,000 workers to meet the trained manpower needs of the 12,000 new rooms overall which is the accommodation expansion target under the Master Plan for Tourism.

Enrolment at HEART for the last fiscal year was over 42,000 and this year we will eclipse the 60,000 mark. At this pace, HEART is targeting annual enrolment of over 100,000 Jamaicans by the beginning of 2008.

Hospitality/tourism training and certification activities absorb the largest portion of training expenditure at HEART, as it is the largest sector in our economy.

Our certified workers have proven themselves truly world class, and are attractive to cruise ship companies and hoteliers in North America and the Caribbean. We want to present to you here at the Iberostar Resort and Spa the cream of our talent pool to give you that special Jamaican competitive edge.

As you have heard, this project is a joint venture between Rose Hall Developments Ltd and Iberostar. The estimated capital expenditure on the project is some US\$850 million. It will add almost 1000 rooms to our stock over a five- year period and is expected to generate employment for close to 1,000 persons. The three hotels will be built in 18-month phases, with the first 350 rooms scheduled for completion by next year's winter season.

Before closing, I want to share with the Montego Bay community the good news: our prospects for a successful 2004 winter tourist season look really good. I know I can rely on you to do what you do so well: welcome our visitors warmly and make them feel at home; ensure that all the individuals and groups work together as a team. In this I include: members of the community, with community leaders in both public and private sector setting the example; the workers in our hotels; at the airport; in ground transportation; in our attractions and restaurants; our stores and our craft markets – and every single citizen whose contribution makes Jamaica the vacation destination with no equal anywhere in the world!

Let's make it a win-win situation - for Jamaica, for our investors and our all-important visitors. We have done it before! Let's keep on doing it and make this our best season ever!

Finally, let me once again express my profound satisfaction at seeing our plans for this welcome new project become reality. We warmly welcome Grupo Iberostar to the Jamaican tourism family. Together, we will make beautiful music that is both pleasant and profitable for everyone.