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**Address by the Most Hon P. J. Patterson, P.C., Q.C., M.P.**

**Prime Minister of Jamaica**

**At the Opening Ceremony of the  
School of Hospitality and Tourism Management (SHTM)  
University of Technology, Jamaica**

**and**

**The Department of Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional  
Management (HRIM)**

**University of Delaware**

**International Hospitality and Tourism Conference**

**Ritz Carlton Golf and Spa Resort,**

**Rose Hall, Montego Bay**

**October 13, 2005**

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## **Salutations:**

I extend a warm welcome to everyone, especially our overseas guests, who have joined their Jamaican counterparts in tourism research for this important and timely conference.

As an outgrowth of the collaborative work being undertaken between Jamaica and the University of Delaware, this event is demonstrative of the type of action we are taking to give practical meaning to our declared commitment to pursue "education for global citizenship."

There is a clear need for more research which is of relevance and practical benefit to the hospitality and tourism industry. This Conference provides an opportunity for academics and industry practitioners to exchange views and help shape the national and regional research agenda which will redound to the benefit of all.

With the projected continued growth of Jamaica's tourism industry over the next five to ten years, within a fiercely competitive global environment, tourism policy planning and implementation must be informed by factual, credible analysis based on information collected by sound research methodology.

Such an approach is hardly optional in our respective capacities as policy makers, educators, aspiring and established industry practitioners, as we are impelled to meet the global economic, social, cultural and environmental imperatives of twenty-first century tourism.

These exchanges augur well for tourism education and enhanced strategic positioning for the national and regional industry. I congratulate the host institutions, welcome the presenters and trust that the next two days will prove instructive, inspiring and enjoyable in true Jamaican style.

## **International**

Since 1950, when international travel started to become accessible to the general public, tourist activity has increased each year at an average rate of 7.1 per cent.

The resilience of tourism has been amply demonstrated worldwide over the last decade in the face of economic downturn in the early 1990s and the extraordinary challenges occasioned by terrorist activity, wars and disease since the start of this new century.

With an all-time record of 760 million last year, we expect tourist traffic to reach 1.6 billion worldwide by 2020.

Last year, the industry injected more than US\$500 billion into the international economy, with associated capital investment and indirect spend in numerous related economic sectors. By 2020, international receipts are expected to reach US\$2 trillion.

## **National**

Tourist activity at the national level provides numerous examples of economic and social transformation of areas that have become popular destinations for overseas visitors. Indeed, for an excellent case study, we need look no further than Jamaica.

We have a long history of involvement in modern global tourism. This year, the Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB), which has responsibility for marketing and promoting the destination, celebrates fifty years of operations. It is for good reason, therefore, that Jamaica is considered a pioneer and leader in regional tourism.

In the Caribbean, we have been endowed with natural assets on which we have built a tourism industry that allows us a competitive advantage in the global economy.

We have begun diversifying our traditional sun, sea, sand product, into emerging niches such as eco-tourism, sports, health, cultural/heritage tourism, as well as meetings and conferences and other events.

The new global economic order requires us to work even harder to remain competitive and to meet global standards in quality of service, facilities and amenities.

Jamaica's response to the opportunities presented by modern tourism include public-sector-led transformation of Ocho Rios and Negril, one from a "sleepy fishing village," the other a practically deserted seven-mile strip of spectacular white sand beach, to highly recognized international visitor destinations. Current large-scale tourism development on the North and South coasts continues apace.

Jamaica's tourism continues to record positive growth.

Our Tourism Master Plan projects that in five years, the total room count in the tourist accommodation sector will reach 35,000, an increase of some 10,000 rooms.

Visitor expenditure is projected to more than double, to reach US\$2.9 billion by 2010. Employment in the sector is expected to increase nearly 6% annually to reach 130,000 by the end of the decade.

Tourism experiences high levels of investment, especially in the accommodation and attractions sub-sectors. Last year, commercial total capital investment was J\$9.8 billion.

Tourism has stimulated substantial infrastructural development. Current major projects include the 270-kilometre North Coast Highway, to run from Negril in the West to Port Antonio in the East; as well as "**Highway 2000**", a tolled expressway from the capital Kingston on the south to the north coast of the island. They are creating modern, safer cross-island traveling conditions between our resort areas, as well as ease of access to heritage sites and other attractions in the interior of our island. This facilitates diversification of the tourism product.

Fulfillment of the potential for tourism growth is a major consideration in the accelerated development of the island's international airports, harbours, utilities, and communications systems.

Strong linkages with other important economic sectors, notably agriculture and manufacturing, are classic indicators of tourism-led development. In Jamaica, the agro-industry provides a prime example of the substantial opportunities for backward and forward linkages for the industry.

Ladies and Gentlemen, cataloguing examples of physical and economic transformation driven by tourism is relatively easy. But tourism has by no means been free from long-standing criticisms of negative effects, notably social and environmental.

It is critical that we fully appreciate and base our policies and actions relating to the industry on the fact that we share a single natural environment. It is this natural environment, which makes us truly unique, and therefore it must be protected and preserved, not only within our own borders but also as an invaluable regional resource. This responsibility is most urgent, at a time when the threats to our delicate ecological balance are heightened and when there is increased frequency and severity of natural disasters.

We must redouble our efforts, nationally and regionally, to modernise our production processes in accordance with best practices and in ways that will minimize pollution. The management of waste disposal must be raised to the highest standards possible, as must the management of our watersheds and forests. These are all essential aspects of a policy direction to ensure environmental sustainability.

By the nature of tourism, the protection of our marine and coastal resources takes on added significance, and especially the protection of our coral reefs. As a small and vulnerable region, the Caribbean has a special interest to avoid the dangers of nuclear spills. Our delicate ecological balance could not handle threats of this magnitude. Eternal vigilance must be our watchword and requires regional solidarity and action in the relevant international fora. Above all, in planning for the growth of the tourist industry we must allow for physical development, which is sustainable. Visitors and destinations alike have a mutual interest in this.

At the global and national levels, there continues to be questioning of the real and sustainable economic benefits of tourism in many host countries, particularly in the developing world.

Happily, advances are increasingly facilitating discussion on performance indicators for tourism in international and national capacity to analyze the industry as a productive activity. Indeed, the WTO, in promoting use of the UN Tourism Satellite Account, has maintained that the industry in many countries has suffered from a lack of political and popular support because its true economic significance has often been underestimated.

Importantly, there have also been serious and consistent efforts by tourism policy makers to position tourism within the most critical areas on the global agenda, notably:

- **Poverty alleviation**
- **Trade liberalization**
- **Environmental sustainability, and,**
- **The need for stronger global partnerships for development.**

I believe tourism is a powerful contributor in the struggle to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). By the employment it creates, directly and indirectly, it is a catalyst for reducing levels of extreme poverty by 2015.

Tourism has been staking its claim as “an agent capable of delivering on the **New Global Framework**” under the broad goals of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). The industry has sought to position itself as facilitating “Liberalization with a Human Face.” There is sharp focus on issues of inequity that have dogged discussions of tourism-driven development.

These include:

- access of emerging nations to the markets of industrialized countries;
- fair conditions of competition, a level playing field for growth of all countries’ tourism services, and
- the promotion of linkages with local providers of goods and services to maximize the benefit of Foreign Direct Investment in host countries.

In pursuing measurable advances in these and other areas, the call has been insistent for stronger global partnerships, shared responsibility and mutual accountability. It has come to be widely accepted that sustainability principles must underpin development programmes. These must include the requisite balance between economic and social progress, concern for the environment and stewardship of natural resources.

Governments as well as private interests increasingly recognize the imperative of an integrated approach to development that fully takes into account the key issues of:

- ✓ local governance;
- ✓ collaboration between regulatory bodies, and,
- ✓ strong community involvement.

There is also the need for a commitment to enhanced life-long learning related to global relationships and preservation of our common heritage. This has inspired the United Nations to declare 2005 to 2014 the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development.

The power of hospitality and tourism to drive national and international development is indisputable. The challenge is how best to direct this power to achieve broad-based, and sustainable development that brings increased direct and indirect benefits to more people and particularly, the most vulnerable.

We must examine how we can best achieve measurable gains based on greater economic linkages, enhanced product quality, sound management structures and innovative methodologies for the industry.

All this requires the framing of policies acceptable to all parties and the employment of the best minds and strategies in numerous functional areas.

The scope of opportunity is itself implied in the immense diversity of the hospitality and tourism industry, spanning all the products and services provided to the millions of persons traveling from their homes each year.

I am confident that during your deliberations and discussions you will examine and reflect on the successes and failures of the national, regional and international educational and training institutions in meeting the employment and human resource needs of the industry for today as well as for the future.

Training in tourism is no longer an area where innate talents and traditional skills will suffice. Tourism is not a lifestyle. It is serious business. It requires the best minds and high levels of proficiency to apply academic rigour and discipline to address the pressing issues that face the industry.

The academic community must become fully engaged in the process. We need better coordination of education and training programmes nationally and regionally to avoid duplication and waste. We must as a region invest more in tertiary tourism education and training institutions. We must also establish a tradition of scholarship in hospitality and tourism.

I have no doubt that the impressive range of research papers to be presented over the next two days will contribute substantially to advancing the theory and practice critical to the industry. This will enable it to better fulfill its economic function. No doubt you will also be addressing the issues of the ability of entrepreneurs, the workforce and service providers, to meet the demands of global tourism, effectively guiding the pace and nature of its development as a means to human advancement.

Before closing, let me invite you, strictly in your role as tourism experts, to take the opportunity of your presence in this resort to sample some of our many world famous attractions, strictly for professional research purposes... any enjoyment you may derive will, of course, be purely coincidental.

I wish you a productive and successful Conference as you advance the cause of the development of the nations of our region.

I thank you.