

**NOTES FOR ADDRESS BY  
PRIME MINISTER,  
MOST HON. P.J. PATTERSON, ON, PC, QC, MP  
FOR GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY  
THE PALMYRA RESORT & SPA  
November 10, 2005**

Salutations.

I extend a very warm welcome to the developers and investors involved in the Palmyra Resort and Spa project. I sincerely appreciate their vote of confidence in the future of the Jamaican tourism industry so clearly demonstrated by their participation in this major project. It is being implemented at a time when there is increased interest in our tourism product as reflected in the large portfolio of resort developments now underway.

These developments are the result of my Administration's deliberate strategies to boost investment in the industry as set out in the Master Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development. The Plan itself was framed with the active participation of all the stakeholders in the industry. Importantly, the Palmyra Resort and Spa project is further confirmation of the progress made in creating a predictable environment for business development in our country.

No one should take this progress for granted or assume that it has come about by accident. On the contrary, it is the direct result of solid economic policies and the measures to liberalize and deregulate trade and the foreign exchange system that we pursued in the face of severe challenges and criticisms. Further, it is the reward for staying the course and for reform of the government's investment promotion machinery. These achievements have been recognized internationally including in the recent World Investment Report that ranks Jamaica higher than most countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean region with respect to the mobilization of investment inflows.

The tremendous advances made over the past decade in infrastructural development - roads, water supply, sewage systems, electricity, telecommunication and airport systems - have been a critical factor in spurring the expansion of investment activity. These advances have served to improve the competitiveness of the local economy and especially the attractiveness of investment in the tourist industry.

While we are pleased with the increased pace of investment in tourism, we are working diligently to attract even greater interest, as we continue to work assiduously to achieve strong economic growth and create jobs especially for our young people. The tourist industry is a priority area because of the labour intensity of its operations and its wide linkages to other sections of the local economy.

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It is therefore a really pleasant duty for me to be here today, taking part in yet another ground breaking event in Rose Hall. The potential of this special spot in our country's beautiful landscape is well on its way to becoming Jamaica's first integrated resort area, a new trend in the world tourist industry.

The area is already home to world class golf courses, luxury hotels, villas, apartments, a middle-level hotel, which is about to be refurbished and upgraded, and another which is under construction. The new shopping complex now being built will further enhance the Rose Hall area.

Today, we are breaking ground for a luxury condominium, which will add another key resort component to the area. It will contribute to the mix of our tourism product that will appeal to a special market segment that is growing rapidly worldwide. All of this is in keeping with our Master Plan for the area.

Palmyra Resort & Spa will include villas and individual luxury residences ranging from 1, 2 and 3-bedroom condos, to 4-bedroom penthouse residences which will be situated in five condominium buildings. This is the first development of this kind in Jamaica. Also in keeping with world trends in the industry is the five-star, 42,000 square-foot Spa and Fitness Centre, which is among the many facilities which will contribute to the high quality ambience of the development.

While the target set by the developers to complete Phase 1 of the project by the end of 2007 is ambitious, I believe that, given their track record and efficiency, this target can be met.

I think you will agree with me that the developers of this project deserve special congratulations for their vision and business skill that have made this venture possible. This is particularly impressive especially considering that this is a new concept for Jamaica. They are creating a first in terms of this type of luxury development in our island.

Rose Hall Developments, one of the members of the partnership in this project, is no stranger to us, having stamped their seal on the Master Plan for the area and successfully undertaken several projects. Their partner in this venture - a newcomer to Jamaica - is Resort Properties Group, a highly respected company that has created international luxury communities in Europe over the last two decades. We extend a special welcome to this group and wish that their investment will prove profitable and that they will find their involvement in Jamaica's tourist industry a rewarding experience in every sense of the word.

Palmyra has been designed by its developers to offer investors in the condominiums and residences a value-added lifestyle and the benefit of an investment opportunity that will appreciate in value, while offering guests the choice of luxury accommodation. This will add new texture as well as additional variety to our tourism product. The success of the project will place Jamaica among the most attractive and prestigious resort areas in the Caribbean, and will enhance the status of Montego Bay as a premier destination.

For the citizens of Montego Bay and surrounding areas, this project will mean significant benefits in terms of employment and the opportunity to supply a range of goods and services during the construction period. These benefits will become even more substantial once the construction is completed.

Palmyra Resort and Spa is the latest in a growing list of resort projects that are now under construction or are about to get started along the north coast of our island.

Last year October, I broke ground for the Iberostar Resort right here in Rose Hall. Just last month, I was again involved in a similar event at Pear Tree Bottom where the Pinero Group is building three hotels consisting of over 1,900 rooms and involving investment of US\$200 million. This can only be described as a tremendous wave of investment activity that will put the economy of this region on a strong footing. Moreover, other hotel projects in Trelawny and Hanover are nearing implementation and should begin construction in early 2006.

Alongside these developments, we are working hard to continue the improvement of our roads, water supply and other infrastructural services. Already, Segment 2 of the Northcoast Highway is well advanced and, in the coming months, work on the Rose Hall section of this Highway will get underway.

Meantime, the major new Martha Brae water supply scheme is also under construction. Special attention is being given as well to the upgrading of communities adjoining the resort areas to ensure that the improvement of the living conditions of residents. In this specific area, government agencies are working with the business interests and new investors to enhance community facilities and social services.

We are all too conscious that while progress has been made, much more needs to be done. We recognise that a greater effort has to be made to integrate investment in the productive sectors with the provision of infrastructure and social services. It is for this reason that I have instructed the Minister of Development to lead a team drawn from the relevant agencies to ensure the necessary coordination. The work of the team covers the major northern coastal region where there are concerns about housing settlements and so on.

Perhaps the most important challenge is to properly prepare our people for the opportunities that are being created. This involves recruitment, training and certification of a large number of persons who will be required to fill a wide range of positions, both in the construction and operation stages. HEART/NTA has already developed a programme and is actively working with the various investors to identify persons to be trained. The urgency and significance of this task is even greater, considering the constant flow of hospitality workers overseas. It is important that community leaders, parents, schools and other interested parties encourage our young people and unemployed persons who are trainable to take the initiative to become involved.

I must say something about the environment, which, as the Minister of Development indicated, is a matter to which the government attaches great importance. Tourists demand a clean environment as an essential part of their vacation experience, and

therefore the tourist industry thrives upon environmental friendliness. Indeed, this is a feature that enhances the competitiveness of world-class enterprises in the tourist industry. Jamaica's eco system is small and sensitive and therefore we are adamant that our economy must be developed on the basis of the environmental sustainability of all, and I stress **ALL**, development activities. With the recognition that without protection of the environment, tourism cannot be viable or sustainable, the relevant regulatory government authorities have been insisting on the enforcement of all procedures, and observance of conditions laid down. I expect that having secured the necessary approvals, the developers of the Palmyra Resort project will be exemplary in their observance of all the requirements.

In seeking to improve the physical surroundings and landscape of our resort centres, resources have been mobilized through the Tourism Enhancement Fund to carry out programmes of beautification and so on. These programmes are expected to begin soon in all the resort centres. Resources from the Fund will also be used to develop our cultural heritage sites and other attractions for visitors and locals alike, as we seek to enhance the Jamaican experience outside of our hotels in addition to the traditional sun, sea and sand. It is well recognized that one of our major attractions is in experiencing the authentic Jamaican way of life.

Let me once again enthusiastically welcome this investment. I confidently expect that the relationship between the developers and adjoining communities will be harmonious. To the people of this area I say, you can make an important contribution to the successful completion of this project by giving it your full support. This area has a world-renowned reputation as being ideal for tourism development, not only because of its spectacular natural beauty, but also for the hospitality of its people. This is yet another opportunity, and you should make sure to take full advantage of the significant business potential that it offers. Not only you who live here, but the entire nation will enjoy the benefits.