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**ADDRESS BY
PRIME MINISTER,
RT. HON. P.J. PATTERSON, P.C, Q.C., M.P.,
AT THE
OPENING OF DOLPHIN COVE, OCHO RIOS,
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2001**

Salutations

It is always a very satisfying experience to participate in the launching of a new venture, especially one that is designed to enrich our tourism product and contribute to the economic and social development of the country.

I would like to congratulate Adrian Foreman, Stafford Burrowes and the entire team for translating a great concept into a novel and exciting tourism attraction.

All of us as Jamaicans must be proud of the fact that Dolphin Cove, in this magnificent setting of four acres of rain forest and lush gardens, can claim the title of “finest dolphin attraction in the Caribbean”.

It offers a unique experience, quality recreation as well as experiential education, for everyone - residents and visitors, adults and children.

In times gone by, the financing of tourism development was seen largely through the prism of accommodations, primarily because investments in accommodation facilities seemed to be more bankable propositions than attractions. For one thing, several attractions in our part of the world are vulnerable to the exigencies of the weather.

In recent times, however, driven by market demands, tourism destinations worldwide have been forced to take a second look at attractions.

Warm-weather destinations have been learning that the beach is no longer enough for an ever-increasing number of visitors. The requirement now is to appeal to niche markets, with their varying needs and interests. Consequently, destinations with the widest range of options for the spending of vacation time are emerging as leaders in the field.

At a fundamental level, we have to bear in mind that our quest in tourism is for growth, based on a sustainable marketing position highlighting what is unique and is essentially Jamaican. --- And for that we must look to our people and our attractions - cultural heritage, eco, nature based and man-made.

Here in Ocho Rios, a very important consideration is that the growing cruise business worldwide, is driven by the range and quality of the ports' attractions. Cruise lines are impressed by diversity. The first Dolphin Cove is ideally located here. Later on, the Company will be developing similar attractions in two other well-chosen locations.

This great resort of Ocho Rios, well-beloved of stopover visitors, has also become our biggest port of call, ranking 11th in the world, according to Lloyd's Cruise International. The stellar attraction is, of course, Dunns River, which attracts an amazing number of visitors. Last year 716,847 passengers came to Ocho Rios, representing an increase of 22.8% over the previous year.

Undoubtedly, Ocho Rios offers the greatest diversity of attractions in the Caribbean. However, as we embark on the earnest mission of sustainable growth and development, our attractions, including the outstanding Dunn's River Falls, will not suffice. We need more and varied attractions to entice the planned increases in the number of visitors.

Fortunately for Jamaica and tourism, our investors in both the public and private sectors are beginning to see the light.

This is why we have the privilege of celebrating the opening of Dolphin Cove today, bringing us in line with other destinations, which offer overwhelmingly popular swim-with-the-dolphin attractions. We have now caught up with the competition in Bahamas, Florida Keys, Cozumel and Cancun.

I might add that two other important projects are being developed in Ocho Rios, at an estimated cost of J\$2 billion.

One is the Ruins. The other is Island Village, which will add a daytime musical entertainment option and a reggae museum to the offerings of the resort.

The Jamaican government, through the NIBJ and the Development Bank, is an enthusiastic supporter of this Dolphin Cove venture, joining with private sector investors in establishing the attraction.

NEPA has also played a supportive role in the development of the attraction and Resort Cottage Incentives will be available for the establishment of nine cottages at a later date.

Because of the imperative to diversify the tourism product and increase the range and variety of our attractions, emphasis is now being placed on providing incentives for attractions. Last year, through the Short Term Incentive Programme (STIP) administered by the Ministry of Tourism and Sport, some seventeen attractions benefited from duty free access to capital goods for the establishment and the refurbishing of attractions.

This programme has now been revived.

Once tourism stays firmly on the path of sustainable development, there will be increased demand for well-conceived and well-operated attractions.

Dolphin Cove will contribute to the economic life of the community and generally to the economic development of the country. Already over eighty persons are directly employed. In addition, many other income-generating activities are generated by this project for bus drivers, taxi operators, tour guides, tour operators and others. The small business people in the communities who serve these persons, are also beneficiaries.

It is a true demonstration that tourism is everybody's business - the entire nation reaps the benefits.

The Dolphin Cove attraction is a very important community asset. Its success will depend not only on the quality of the service that is offered inside, but also the experience of the visitors.

In declaring this attraction open, I commend it to the entire tourist industry as one, which should be nurtured and cherished and to assure the operators that the venture has the full blessing and support of my Administration.