

Transcript - Media Conference - Office of the Prime Minister, Jamaica

Date: Thursday 21st July, 2016.

Venue: Office of the Prime Minister, Jamaica.

Notes: Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honourable Keith Rowley and Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Honourable Andrew Holness, signed the Joint Communiqué yesterday (Thursday 21st July, 2016) during a media conference at the Office of the Prime Minister, Jamaica.

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Prime Minister Andrew Holness: Good morning. Over the past few days, Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley and I had many hours of engaging discussions on bi lateral regional and multi-lateral issues of neutral interest and concern. I am very pleased Prime Minister Rowley, that you accepted my invitation to visit to visit Jamaica and that we were afforded this time together to know each other better towards strengthen our bi lateral relations. Our discussions were frank and open and conducted in any atmosphere of growing friendship and mutual respect. Prime Minister Rowley and I were firmly committed to a focus and fully result oriented approach as we consider proposals for full economic partnerships and greater cooperation to drive our growth process and to improve the lives of our people.

We address critical issues pertaining to the proper functioning of the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME) and shared perspectives relating to its implementation. We spoke about the members states regarding its guarantee of greed measures for hassle free travel. The application of the ten agreed categories of skilled labour as well as even acceptance of CSME skilled certificates throughout the Caribbean region.

In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago undertook in this process to review its legislation to address the additional categories of movement. In recognizing the immigration and other difficulties some Jamaicans experience in travelling to Trinidad and Tobago, Prime Minister Rowley has given an assurance that his government is taking the necessary steps to improve the situation and effectively implement the undertakings agreed between our two foreign Ministers and therefore encouraged by the fact that the facility at the Piarco International Airport for accommodation of persons who have been refused entry is expected to be completed by the end of this month. In addition, the training of Immigration officials has taken place and is expected to be an on-going exercise.

We have also seen a marked improvement in the processing of detainees resulting in a significant number of returns, while others are being processed now for departure. Prime Minister Rowley

and I acknowledged the need for improvements in our trade relations including removing the impediments of free trade and free movements of goods and services between our two countries. As leaders we both agreed to work towards a better and stable environment for businesses to thrive, to increase investment flows between the two countries and to develop mechanisms to develop closer trade cooperation and the resolutions of trade issues.

We explored mutual initiatives to strengthen relations and cooperation in energy, tourism air and sea transportation and technical and cultural exchanges, including cooperation in sports, films, fashion and the creative industries generally. We agreed to follow up on discussion on energy related issues with bi lateral meetings at the technical and ministerial levels. We also underscore the importance of security cooperation and intelligence sharing to counter the threats of transnational crime and to protect our boarders.

With regard to enhance dialogue and cooperation between our two countries, we agreed to prioritize the bilateral frame work agreement currently under consideration. This would provide a structured medium for robust bilateral discussion and cooperation in various areas of national development through the establishment through a joint commission. We both agreed that Caricom must be made better to maximise the benefits it promises to its member states and that Caricom should be able to assist member states in responding to external challenges and to be better able to deal with the impact of increasing intensity of the challenges we face.

Note was taken of the reformed process on the way in Caricom and Jamaica's establishment of a Commission to assess its benefits of its participation in this organization. We also agree to strengthen our close collaboration at the multi-lateral level as small island developing states. We are pleased that the program organised by the governments was comprehensive enough to include meetings with representatives in the private sector, the UWI community and of course with Trinidadians nationals at your High Commission.

The official visit provided the opportunity for useful political dialogue and a development for a strategic way forward for both our countries. We have attained greater clarity on sensitive issues which affect both our countries and laid a foundation for practical follow up and follow through on areas discuss through the framework and agreement mentioned earlier together with an agreed list of action items. Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a time for bold leadership and courage to make the right decisions to chart new pathways to reset understandings and not to be tempted to base our direction purely on narrow self-interest. We must build strong alliances in this inter dependent and inter connected world if our objectives are to be realised and our people and our people involved in sustainable development.

Today, as we closed this official visit I can truly say I am optimistic that the relationship between Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago can be further nurtured to fulfil our common aspirations and those of our peoples.

Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley: Thank you very much Prime Minister Holness. Maybe all I should say in this case at this stage is, I concur. Prime Minister statement represents a faithful report of what was taking place during this week. If I may review the week, all I can add is that, the next time the persons organising the program should be informed that there are only twenty four hours in the day. The program was filled with opportunities and we took them all. And what started out as a mission of value of despair, when we were called to this meeting by developments in both countries particularly in Jamaica, has certainly turned out to be some kind of summit. Because is not every day the Prime Ministers of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, or two Prime Ministers at all, get to spend all day and maybe all week working on issues which are of vital importance in the territories. That's what we did this week. Let us not lose sight of what failure, might have potent.

If we had not agreed to what was described as a successful summit and to have taken initiatives to put to an end, what was festering between our countries, the consequences would have been quite dyer for our business communities and for our countries as a whole. It's in the face of that threat and the deteriorating relationships and all the consequences that we would not desire, that we spoke about this development in Belize and Prime Minister Holness extended an invitation to me. I accepted that invitation and we immediately set out to plan the week that was.

So, today I can report it was a success and the opportunities granted to me and my delegation to meet with all the elements of Jamaica who looked on while we planned and executed this week, the business community, the governments, officials, technicians and I dear say citizens outside our region. I think it would be good news to report that Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, have agreed to work together and to provide the kind of leadership the population expects, of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica as we seek to convert our dreams and visions of Caricom into realities for the people who live within our borders.

That has been the outcome of this week. While we started of addressing this particular issue of movement of persons within our region between our countries, we did in fact spend most of the time threating with other issues which might not have attracted our attention at this time and those issues are the ones we have committed to as reported in the statement made by Prime Minister Holness and in the communiqué side. So, I want to thank all the people of Jamaica and the various stations that made these contacts available and made the outcomes successful. I want to thank the people government and organisers of Jamaica for hosting us in a very excellent way in which you have done and all that is left for me to do is formally and publicly on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and government which I head, to extend an invitation to the Prime Minister of Jamaica and delegation, particularly his Foreign Minister and Attorney General to join us in Trinidad and Tobago at the earliest opportunity so we can continue this dialogue which can only be re downed to the benefit of Trinidad and Tobago as we strengthen our relationships. As you accept that invitation, we promise if we don't go to cricket, we are going to take you to football.

So, it has been a very successful week, and hopefully is it a beginning of a better way of doing business between Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica.

Prime Minister Andrew Holness: Thank you Prime Minister. To further place the visit in context, we are two new governments. Prime Minister Rowley government is a very months older than my government. We are the two large economies in the Caribbean. We have the two largest populations in the Caricom except for Haiti. We traditionally are very close by links of history, by sport, by culture. Not many Jamaicans may know this but close to sixteen thousands Jamaicans travelled to Trinidad and Tobago each year and not only for Carnival and close to thirteen thousand Trinidadians travel to Jamaica each year and there is a sizeable population living between the two countries. There is significant trade between the two countries significant cultural exchange between our two countries. There is much to be gained by strengthen our bi lateral relationship.

So, with a new government in both Jamaica and the new government in Trinidad, there was an opportunity to reset the relationship to create a new vista of opportunities for both our countries and I was very hearten when Prime Minister Rowley, without second thought accepted the invitation and I now, without even second thought or consultation accepting your invitation to visit Trinidad... *(Applause)*

It is important that the regulatory environment, the government to government relationship is strong. Once that is strong and you have these very close fraternal links in culture, sports and education, in trade and finance, then you can see the opportunities for economic growth for both our countries. Trade is not a win, lose engagement. I believe that trade can be a win, win engagement. But the governments have to be enlightened and governments have to lead its people to this enlightened view that open exchange, free trade and fair trade is beneficial for all our countries.

Jamaica cannot continue to look only at the North American markets of the European markets. Jamaica must broaden its footprints right across the region. Caricom must be owned as our market and the government must set the tone and this bi lateral exchange is the start of that. So I would like to thank Prime Minister Rowley, thank his delegation who had come here and really integrated with us, frank exchanges and I may sometimes heated exchanges, but at the end of the day there is greater clarity greater understanding and most importantly restored friendship. Thank You Prime Minister Rowley.

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