

Japan, Jamaica and CARICOM – Strengthening the traditional friendship



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I feel delighted to be able to visit Jamaica for the first time as Foreign Minister of Japan.

Though geographically Jamaica is remote from Japan, Jamaica is well known in Japan for distinctive features such as beautiful beaches, track and field, reggae, as well as Blue Mountain Coffee.

Japan and Jamaica are maritime nations and important partners which share fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1964, we have continuously maintained good relations, and have been cooperating on the international scene. At this time, towards the promotion and expansion of a free and open international order based on the rule of law, I decided to visit Jamaica to further pursue "diplomacy with a sense of caring and robustness" in this region.

In 2015, then Prime Minister Abe visited Jamaica for the first time as Prime Minister of Japan and confirmed Japan's policy to strengthen the 'Japan-Jamaica Partnership (the J-J Partnership)'. The two countries are promoting cooperation in the areas of (1) cooperation towards sustainable development including overcoming vulnerabilities particular to Small Island Developing States, (2) deepening and expanding bonds founded on exchanges and friendship, and (3) cooperation in addressing challenges of

the international community such as climate change.

Japan and Jamaica are facing the common issue of being easily affected by natural disasters. Japan has the aim to support small island countries and others that are faced with special vulnerabilities, including Jamaica, and has been conducting cooperation in the fields of disaster prevention and environmental protection. Moreover, 462 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) have been incorporated for the sustainable development of Jamaica.

Trade & Investment is the key for sustainable development. The Blue Mountain Coffee is particularly popular in Japan and has been imported a lot to Japan. Also, a Japanese company is participating in the management of coffee farms in Jamaica. A Japanese company is contributing to the electric power sector in Jamaica as well. I also pay attention to the possibility of developing the Special Economic Zones as a Logistics Hub which the Jamaican government is promoting.

To embody the good friendship in a most tangible manner is in people-to-people interchange and through the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, up to now, 382 Jamaicans have visited Japan to teach English. Additionally, the exchanges with Tottori Prefecture and Tottori City, which is the host town of the Jamaican Olympic and Paralympic Team, have been active.

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is a big group consisting of fourteen countries on the international scene. Along with Jamaica, as an integral country, we have been associating in areas such as the United Nations, disaster prevention, climate change, and the legal order for the seas.

On the occasion of the visit of Prime Minister Andrew Holness in December 2019, Japan and Jamaica confirmed to strengthen the traditional friendship as important partners.

On this occasion of my visit to Jamaica, I plan to hold Ministerial dialogue with Jamaican Government officials and with CARICOM member states in the Japan-CARICOM Ministerial Meeting to be held online. In these meetings, we will prioritise the following:

The first point is to confirm the alliance for the maintenance and

expansion of free and open international order based on the rule of law, with CARICOM countries including Jamaica which share the fundamental values. Between Jamaica and Japan, the cooperation is ongoing in related areas such as the provision of patrol vessels for the purpose of maritime security and disaster relief.

The other point is to correspond regarding global issues. I want to confirm with CARICOM countries including Jamaica, which have vulnerability as small island countries, that we will be cooperating continuously on global issues such as disaster prevention and climate change. Japan has provided emergency assistance to St Vincent and the Grenadines in response to the volcanic eruption in April 2021. Additionally, about the COVID19 the world is facing, Japan has been supporting to strengthen health and medical systems of each country considering that international cooperation is indispensable to tackle the COVID19. In Jamaica, Japan has contributed medical equipment valuing approximately US\$1.85 million and also implemented the 'Last One Mile Support' contribution through UNICEF to enhance cold chain storage capacity for the distribution of vaccines. During this visit, I am planning to exchange opinions among Jamaica and CARICOM countries on how to overcome the COVID19 which is a common issue in international society.

I want to strengthen the bonds of friendship connecting Japan and Jamaica, and Japan and CARICOM, to enhance our cooperation to address the issues confronting international society.

During this week, the Tokyo Olympic will be inaugurated, and the Paralympic will follow it. As of this moment when the world is confronted by the difficulty of the novel coronavirus, Japan would like to send a message that by unifying the world, the effort and wisdom of human beings can be used to overcome this difficulty.

The accomplishments of Jamaican athletes such as those in track and field, beginning with Usain Bolt, are well known in Japan. I hope the Jamaican athletes will be actively involved and achieve remarkable success in the Tokyo Olympics.