



ADDRESS BY
THE HEAD OF DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO JAMAICA

AMBASSADOR PAOLA AMADEI

ON OCCASION OF THE SCHUMAN DAY CELEBRATIONS
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REMEMBERING OUR HISTORY TO FACE OUR FUTURE CHALLENGES?

Protocol

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be here today, amongst friends of the European Union, celebrating our achievements so far and reflecting on the road ahead of us. We celebrate Europe Day on the anniversary of the Schuman Declaration and the end of World War Two. This day represents for us a symbolic turning point as 63 years ago an entire continent decided to leave behind the horrors of two World wars and to start setting the vision for the European project.

Today we can celebrate the EU's achievements in promoting democracy, human rights, peace and prosperity, on the European continent and beyond. Achievements that were recognized in 2012 with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize. This process has never been an easy one and we had to endure a lot of hardship to get to where we are.

The accession of Croatia as a full member of the European Union on the 1st of July is a reminder that peace and democracy should never be taken for granted, as less than 20 years ago these areas of our continent continued to be raged by war. We don't need to be self-congratulatory about our achievements, but we need to find strength in our past to overcome the challenges ahead of us.

Similar considerations, I believe, can be applied to Jamaica. The fights for emancipation and independence, as well as the challenges that you had to face as an independent country, are all part of your DNA and of what you are now. They are your main strength in facing the obstacles ahead.

I always like to recall that the European Union and independent Jamaica are friends from children's age. The European Economic Community was only five years old when Jamaica's independence came in 1962 and had barely reached the age of maturity when the European Commission established its Delegation in Jamaica in April 1976 following the signature of the First of the Lomé Conventions. We have done and achieved so much together since.

Our relationship has evolved and matured with the age but has never been put into question, even when the process of EU enlargement has involved new Members with very little ties to this part of the World.

Some commentators like to spread rumours of an imminent divorce with Jamaica and the Caribbean. These allegations however are dispelled by the facts. It is true that in the last two years we have been forced to withhold budget support resources to Jamaica, but we have worked with the Government throughout this period, and continue to do so, in order for the eligibility conditions to be restored as quickly as possible.

I am hoping that the Government's efforts to set the economy on a long term sustainability path and to reform key areas of the public administration will soon allow us to unblock these resources. It's clear that within this context the relationship with the IMF and the other international partners is crucial, but it is still the Government that sits at the steering wheel and drives the process.

One other point that is worth stressing over and over is that the EU cooperation in Jamaica has never been frozen, on the contrary projects continue to be implemented at a very good pace and the EU remains by far Jamaica's largest grant donor. In 2012 we have disbursed 11.5 million Euros, corresponding to 1.4 billion JMD. In this past year we've signed for new projects to support energy, natural disaster recovery, capacity building and, very importantly, the continuation of one of our most successful interventions, the Poverty Reduction Programme or PRP. One additional project has been signed to support the implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) in this context. We are also glad that as from 2013 Jamaica is implementing the tariff reductions agreed under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) – the improved access to the EU markets can be an added bonus to economic recovery and development.

This year we're about to launch a project on maternal and child mortality as you have heard from the Minister of Health that is worth 22 million Euros, 2.8 billion JMD which will support, amongst other things, the creation of 11 High-Dependency Units for mothers and newborns in the 4 regional hospitals, the Victoria Jubilee and the Bustamante hospitals, as well as the training of medical and non-medical personnel to properly operate them.

Tomorrow we will officially open the North Coast Highway and rename the Agualtavale roundabout in St. Mary Robert Schuman Roundabout honouring the excellent relationship the EU shares with Jamaica.

But what we envisage for Jamaica is much more than a relationship between donor and foreign aid recipient. The recent Joint Caribbean-EU Partnership Strategy aims to develop a new dimension to the relationship, allowing the Caribbean and EU nations to deepen dialogue and address together key challenges in core areas such as climate change and natural disasters, security, cooperation in multilateral fora.

We want an enhanced level of political cooperation. The recent approval of the UN Arms Trade Treaty proves that big changes are possible if like-minded countries act together as did Jamaica and the EU. In a similar vein, it is our hope that next year when we gather to celebrate Europe Day, we will also be able to count Jamaica as the 123rd State Party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, ICC. Jamaica has a big role to play, especially on issues that are of vital importance for the country such as security and climate change, and has a lot to gain from a strong European Union.

In this context I would like to commend the colleagues Ambassadors of the EU Member States, especially those that are resident here, for the work that we've been doing together. Our Jamaican counterparts know that they can count on a group that can speak with one voice and report to the respective capitals.

In conclusion I would like to offer some considerations on the future of the European project. It is clear we as a Union are ourselves currently enduring many economic and political challenges. The global crisis and the Euro crisis have been a hard awakening for many Europeans. The unprecedented size and nature of the challenges that we're facing has required some time to our leaders to devise a common strategy to react. It is also undeniable that, within this context, some have been tempted to re-patriate powers in the national states. This doesn't mean however that the EU has been sitting on its hands waiting for the crisis to disappear as some international analysts seem to suggest.

If one looks at the facts it is clear that the EU response has been unprecedented in scope and nature anywhere in the World, and give us a sense of how European leaders came together for the good of their countries, the Union and the World. As President Van Rompuy commented very recently "Maybe not all leaders were fully aware of their role all-of-the-time, and each had his own concerns, but jointly they were (and still are) capable of taking big decisions, which later will be seen as of historical importance.

Decisions that saved the euro, that safeguarded European unity, and that in the process are changing our Union. We survived the storm, and we stayed together".

We need to remain wary of the challenges ahead but I believe that we don't have to give in to pessimism, as we have now many reasons to be optimistic about the future of the European Union, Jamaica, and of our partnership.

Thank you.