



Jamaica

Office of the Prime Minister

Jamaica House  
Kingston

## **MESSAGE FROM THE HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER**

### **ANNUAL RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WEEK 2008**

The commemoration of Restorative Justice Week offers the ideal opportunity for increased public awareness and education on the issue of restorative justice. While attaining growing prominence internationally, there is still some obscurity surrounding this unique type of justice in Jamaica. Over the years, an escalating crime rate has left in its wake, many victims who still carry the burden of the atrocities meted out to them and their families by criminals. Restorative justice seeks to 'lift' this burden and offer restitution to these victims. Regrettably, in some instances, the victims believe that they have been denied justice and therefore develop contempt and cynicism for our nation's justice system.

A well-functioning and fair justice system is a critical feature of any free and democratic society. The "quality of our democracy" is dependent on the quality of the justice system that exists. I recognize the challenges with which the Government is faced, in strengthening and restoring the country's ailing justice system, to a healthy state that will engender greater public confidence.

The Government is committed over time, to enacting the necessary legislation that will allow for the practice of restorative justice in our court system. The advancement of restorative justice as an appropriate response to crime, will not be without its challenges. Many persons are oftentimes filled with animosity towards the perpetrators of heinous crimes; and believe that they should be punished to the fullest extent of the law. They may view restorative justice as a 'soft' approach, to dealing with hardened criminals. I encourage all of us to seek to open our minds to the concept of restorative justice and embrace its merits to our criminal justice system. It is not just our victims that need healing, but the criminals as well, in order to restore and reintegrate them into society; thereby stemming the vicious cycle of crime that exists and restoring security and sanctity to our society.

As you celebrate this Week and mark your achievements thus far, I wish for you every success in your planned activities.

**Bruce Golding**  
**Honourable Prime Minister**