



MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER
COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS

**The Forty-Eighth Anniversary of Independence
of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas**

Dear Fellow Bahamians:

Independence is a time to celebrate the people, the culture and the history of a sovereign Bahamas.

Over many generations, peoples from different lands and diverse cultures made The Bahamas their home and their refuge and strength.

Through resourcefulness and a spirit of unity, they forged the vibrant and dynamic nation-state we today call home.

At Independence, we celebrate our freedoms and our democracy, while acknowledging that our rights come with the responsibilities of citizenship.

We are a country with high voter participation.

We enjoy a free press, freedom of conscience, association and worship.

Our democratic traditions are well entrenched, including free and fair elections.

In our representative democracy, the people rule through the ballot box.

We must continue to guard this heritage.

Let us never take it for granted.

Generations of fighters, dreamers and committed citizens fought for our hard-won freedoms.

Each generation has the responsibility to guard and to strengthen our democracy.

Through dialogue and civic participation we help to renew and to protect our democratic institutions, traditions and practices.

Dear Fellow Bahamians:

Through their hard work and creativity over many decades, Bahamians built the most diverse tourism economy in the region

In pre-pandemic times we welcomed more than seven million visitors to our shores annually.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused the worst economic crisis and the worst public health crisis in our history to occur simultaneously.

These are unprecedented times for our people.

At the worst of the pandemic, global travel was nearly non-existent.

This caused tremendous hardship for tourism-based economies such as The Bahamas.

Hotels were closed.

There were no ships at our cruise ports.

As daunting as the challenges have been, the pandemic has not broken the Bahamian spirit!

It has not broken our will!

It has not defeated our courage!

The resolve and resiliency of our people, along with the Government's public health and policies and economic support, have helped get us through.

On this Independence Day, there is hope for a better future emerging out of this global health emergency.

The theme for this year's Independence, "*A Celebration of Life: Revive Us Again*" is consequently so fitting.

To help the revival of our economy and country, the Government is investing heavily in infrastructure across the Commonwealth to ensure that all parts of the country are able to fully benefit from the economic revival that is underway.

To encourage and further Bahamian creativity and ingenuity, the Government of The Bahamas has pledged the historic sum of \$250 million in funding to small businesses over five years through the Small Business Development Centre.

Bahamians must become greater owners of our economy.

Bahamians have the talent to work at every level of enterprise in our country.

Bahamians have the talent to own any type of business in our economy.

Let us be thankful to God on this Independence Day that through His blessings and mercy we are overcoming this most trying of times.

Dear Fellow Bahamians:

There is something each of us can do to help this Bahamian revival to gather pace.

We must continue to get vaccinated.

The vaccines are the way to end this terrible pandemic.

The virus that causes Covid-19 spreads easily.

The new Delta variant is becoming the dominant strain.

It may be the most infectious version of the virus to date.

Fortunately, the vaccines available to us have proven effective in protecting against this variant and other strains once individuals are fully vaccinated.

Vaccines are the way to ensure we limit future outbreaks.

They are the way to ensure more visitors come to our shores in order to help revive our economy and boost jobs and opportunity.

Tourists will increasingly want to visit places that have highly vaccinated populations in order to ensure their safety.

Let us end this pandemic in The Bahamas by coming forward in large numbers to take the live-saving vaccines.

Let us do this so we can all get back to more normal times as quickly as possible.

Fellow Bahamians:

During the pandemic, I evoked the inspiration of the late beloved E. Clement Bethel, who composed the song, "When the Road Seems Rough" for the Legend of Sammy Swain.

Let me paraphrase a verse from that song:

"When the road seems rough, when you've borne enough, don't cry, don't sigh ... just keep on trying ... This time will pass, tomorrow's another day."

The worst phase of the pandemic may be passing.

Our national revival has already started.

Today is already a better day.

And tomorrow will be an even better day as the Bahamian Revival continues to flourish.

The time we hoped for has begun.

Let us celebrate this new life, as the God of New Beginnings continues to revive our spirits, to revive our hearts and to revive and restore our Bahamas.

Have a Happy Independence Day!

Please stay safe and please continue to follow the health care guidelines.

May God bless our Commonwealth.

May He especially keep safe our frontline healthcare workers, the uniformed branches and other public officers, who have done so much to keep us safe during the pandemic.

Thank you and good evening.
