



Open Letter to Maroon Communities on the Occasion of the 287th Maroon Anniversary Celebrations

Dear Maroon Communities,

On the occasion of your 287th Anniversary Celebration, I extend warmest regards and heartfelt congratulations to the distinguished Colonels and Deputies from Accompong, Charles Town, Moore Town, Scotts Hall, and Maroons across Jamaica and beyond.

This milestone marks not only 287 years of freedom but also a legacy of resilience, cultural preservation, and self-determination. It is a moment to honour the sacrifices of your ancestors whose courage and determination secured their autonomy and whose unwavering spirit continues to inspire us all.

The theme of this year's celebration, *"Echoes of the Past, Blueprint of the Future,"* serves as a profound reminder of the Maroon's significant role in shaping our nation's history and future. The treaties signed in 1738 and 1739, particularly the 1738 Treaty of Peace and Friendship, affirmed the Maroons' rights to autonomy and their tenure over the sacred lands in and around Cockpit Country. These lands, nurtured and safeguarded with respect for spiritual and cultural values, remain a cornerstone of Maroon heritage and identity.

Throughout history, the Maroons have contributed immensely to Jamaica's development, offering invaluable lessons in sustainable living and traditional medicinal practices. The use of ganja, rooted in Maroon traditions, stands as one such example. During my tenure as Minister of Justice in 2015, I was proud to champion the decriminalisation of ganja—a step towards recognising its cultural and medicinal significance. However, much more must be done to develop a thriving ganja industry that benefits the Maroons and other indigenous communities.

The legacy of the Maroons aligns with the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, affirming rights to cultural expression, identity, health, and education. These principles provide a foundation for partnerships that honour Maroon traditions while fostering opportunities for development, including ventures like Wellness Tourism, which leverage Jamaica's natural resources sustainably.

As we celebrate this rich heritage, we must also address the need for meaningful dialogue between the Government of Jamaica and Maroon communities. Constructive discussions are vital to resolving longstanding concerns, ensuring the rights and contributions of the Maroons are respected, and enabling their rightful place in Jamaica's future. The



MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

unwillingness of the Government to fully engage with the Maroon community remains a significant barrier to progress and undermines efforts to address critical issues.

On this historic occasion, I reaffirm the Opposition's unwavering commitment to advocating for justice, respect, and collaboration with the Maroon people. Whether addressing legal, social, or economic concerns, we stand ready to engage in efforts that advance sustainable solutions while preserving the sacred lands and legacy of the Maroons.

The journey of the Maroons represents an indelible chapter in Jamaica's history. It is a testament to the power of community and the enduring spirit of self-determination.

Congratulations on this 287th Anniversary Celebration. May the "echoes of the past" guide a "blueprint of the future" that secures dignity and success for generations to come. As you honour your rich legacy, may your celebrations inspire a brighter future for all.

With respect and admiration,

Mark J. Golding, MP
Leader of the Opposition