

Jamaica to commemorate Nelson Mandela International Day

Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller has placed Jamaica among the community of nations which will observe July 18 as Nelson Mandela International Day.

Launching the national observance on Wednesday (July 11) at Jamaica House, Mrs Simpson Miller said the Day resonated well with Jamaica given our history of support for the cause to which Mandela dedicated his life and work. "Long before our Nation achieved Independence, ours was a consistent and strong voice, heard internationally on the important issues of peace, human rights and freedom and our observance of the Nelson Mandela International Day is a tribute to Mandela's struggle for the rights of humanity and his enormous contribution to the culture of peace and freedom," the Prime Minister said. Jamaica, she said, is proud to join the global community in observing the Day and will do so by committing 67 minutes of our time in service to others and in honour of Mandela's 67 years of service. Mrs Simpson Miller called on elected representatives, the business sector, government and civil society organisations to join in the initiative and use those 67 minutes on that Day to connect with children, affirm our commitment to strong family values, and the protection of our children from violence and abuse. "Let us commit to using the Day to show our love to those who are easiest to love - our children," she said and called on individuals and organizations to partner with children's homes and places of safety, summer schools, vacation Bible schools, youth clubs, hospitals and other institutions serving children and to do something special for the children during those 67 minutes. The South African High Commissioner, Mathu Joyini, thanked the Prime Minister for her patronage of the first Nelson Mandela Day in Jamaica and said that the outpouring of support for the day showed that Jamaicans were generous people. In his remarks, Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme, Dr Arun Kashyap, said that with one step at a time, Nelson Mandela's service was for human rights, justice, democracy, reconciliation, gender equality for his own people and for the world. Nelson Mandela International Day was declared by the United Nations in 2009. Pledges of support for the Day have already come from several private sector companies and organizations including the United States Embassy, Scotiabank, Jamaica National Building Society, the Jamaica/South African Society, Crayons Count, Digicel, Sandals, LIME, Jamaica Observer, RJR Group, Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica, GraceKennedy among others. The Prime Minister expressed appreciation for the interest and support shown in ensuring a meaningful observance of the Day.