

OAS Secretary General Lauds PM

WASHINGTON (Jamaica Information Service)

Tuesday, March 14, 2006

Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General, Jose Miguel Insulza, has lauded Prime Minister P. J. Patterson for his work over the years, to promote the cause of marginalized and economically challenged countries within the hemisphere.

Secretary General Insulza, who was speaking at a special protocolary session of the Permanent Council of the OAS in Washington, DC on Thursday (March 9), said that Mr. Patterson had dedicated his public life to championing causes such as the alleviation of poverty, increasing access to education and providing employment and economic opportunity for those who are less competitive.

He further praised the Prime Minister, who, in a matter of weeks, will demit office as head of government, for his efforts "to make Jamaica a better place for its people, where they (can) feel a greater sense of self-esteem and ownership in their country's future and are empowered so as to benefit from its development".

The special OAS session was held in honour of Mr. Patterson's decades of service within CARICOM, as well as his broad contribution on the hemispheric political stage.

Ambassador Marina Valere, Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the OAS, chaired the session, which was attended by diplomatic representatives of the 34 member states of the organization, United States government officials and congressional representatives, as well as officials from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), European Union, China and Nigeria. Mr. Patterson was also invited to speak at the session.

Speaking to JIS News prior to the function, Jamaica's Ambassador to the United States and Permanent Representative to the OAS, Professor Gordon Shirley, noted that the Secretary General's invitation to Mr. Patterson was "a recognition of the tremendous contribution Prime Minister Patterson has made to the quest for democracy and social progress, not only in the Caribbean, but in the hemisphere at large".

"His resolute and consistent advocacy for human rights and economic empowerment has been instrumental in putting social justice issues at the very forefront of the Inter-American agenda and constitutes a lasting and important legacy for the region and indeed the hemisphere as a whole," Professor Shirley noted.