

# **Welcome Address - E-Payment Launch**

**Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2003  
Jamaica Conference Centre**

Mr. Chairman, Minister, the Honourable Phillip Paulwell  
Honourable Deika Morrison, Other Members of the  
platform, Other invited guests, Ladies and Gentlemen - a  
special good morning.

The Jamaica Customs Department along with our partners  
Scotiabank, New Economy Project(NEP)/ (United States  
Agency for International Development) U.S.AID and  
FISCAL Services extend a special welcome to another  
historic event in Customs - The launch of the Electronic  
Payment System.

I would also like to use this opportunity to publicly extend  
heartiest congratulations to Jamaica's first female President  
of the Jamaica Manufacturer's Association - Miss Doreen  
Frankson. History in the making.

On January 7<sup>th</sup> of this year the Department worked with

Scotiabank, FISCAL, with technical support from USAID/NEP, to introduce the E-Payment System. The pilot started with fifteen importers and their Customs Brokers. The period seemed long but we wanted to ensure that we got rid of the kinks before a full scale launch.

Approximately four years ago, through the Public Sector Modernization Project funded by the World Bank, we embarked on the road to reform and modernization of Customs. We promised in our vision and mission statements, among other things, to facilitate trade and travel by working with our stakeholders to simplify the business processes and make the system more user friendly, transparent and accountable. The E-payment is but another step on the long and somewhat rocky road to a world class organization. This is a commitment we have given and one we intend to honour.

As stated earlier, the road is long but we all know that the longest journey begins with the proverbial first step. We have come a far way in a relatively short time. Some of you

will remember the days when we had to collect money using our pockets as tills as we did not even have cashiers. Pressing along, we are (to use a new buzz phrase) picking the low hanging fruits, while keeping our eyes on the ones at the top of the tree, just waiting for the colour to turn.

We started the process with some radical changes a few years ago with the introduction of the Selective Importation Inspection System(SIIS) for containers, a big risk but we took it non-the-less. (We realize there has to be trust between the private and public sectors.) The Site Inspection Unit was established with a dedicated staff so that importers and Customs Brokers would not have to wait until after 5pm to have containers examined and /or released on site. The Fast Track Entry Processing System, that is, expediting the processing of entries for Customs Brokers with low error rating was introduced and later enhanced through the introduction of the Pre-Arrival Processing System, that is, the processing of import entries prior to the arrival of the goods. In December of last year, the Duty Free Allowance for passengers was increased

from US\$150 to US\$500, not every six months but every time you travel.

A query system is now in place where you can use your TRN and a password to ascertain the status of entries - no longer can Customs or Customs Brokers say “it wasn’t me”; you will be able to see for yourselves from the comfort of your office, using your PC who (if anyone) is at fault for delays. Last month we removed the locks and resident Customs Officers from Private Bonded warehouses, another radical move. The Warehouse Keepers will now police themselves, again, this is building trust between ourselves and our clients.

After many years of deliberation at CARICOM, the De Minimis Value was introduced, i.e., goods of a value of US \$20 FOB and below will be released without the payment of duties - this will, I am sure, be a welcome relief for manufacturers with samples for research and development.

Minister Paulwell, Sir, we are committed to embracing state of the art technology. Today it is the e-payment, tomorrow

will be the E-Manifest for cargo and passenger processing. To this end we implore the shipping agents, wharf companies, Port Authority, Airports Authority, the airlines, freight forwarders and warehouse keepers to work with us so we can complete this final step in the process. Then we in Jamaica will be real trailblazers and at the same time give you the high quality service that as taxpayers and citizens you truly deserve. We must work hand in hand in our quest for growth, wealth creation, economic development and prosperity for all.

We thank you and God bless.

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