

**Welcome remarks by
Mr. Douglas Orane
Chairman & CEO, GraceKennedy Limited
Western Union I-PLEDGE Launch**

Wednesday, April 14, 2010 at Terra Nova Hotel, 11:00 a.m.

It is always an exciting time for me when GraceKennedy or any of our subsidiaries get involved in programmes which are geared towards the development of our youth, either in sports, education or community development.

However, I have a particular bias towards education, especially this targeted approach at boosting technology, numeracy and literacy at the primary level. This is an essential strategy as it is the foundation for the growth of the nation.

It is efforts like the I-Pledge Programme which will help Jamaica in our quest to realise Vision 2030, making our country the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business.

There are many skeptics who have openly derided this vision, but we cannot side with the naysayers. Jamaica has great potential and it is our youth who will play a pivotal role if we are to realise this potential.

Any programme which challenges the energies of our children to embrace literacy and better reading skills is a step in the right direction and I am pleased that Western Union has spearheaded this initiative with such passion and enthusiasm.

Our involvement with the young people of Jamaica is well documented and it is a deliberate part of our corporate strategy to help build Jamaican success stories. We just completed another year of thrilling sponsorship of the Boys' and Girls' Champs which was celebrating its centennial. This cradle of Jamaica's powerful athletics programme sends a clear signal that success does not happen overnight, and that national excellence is the result of targeted investment our young people.

For many years, people from other parts of the world have wondered why Jamaica has been a world-beater in athletics for such a long period, ever since Herb McKenley, George Rhoden and Arthur Wint led the way at the Olympics in London in 1948 and then even more impressively in 1952. Now the secret is out - the foundation is the high school athletics championships which is our national treasure. Our performance in athletics is no flash in the pan. It is a lifelong process which has grown from generation to generation.

If we can transform the “Champs” spirit into the education transformation programme in Jamaica, and make it a lifelong process, handed down from generation to generation, our productivity levels would rise and our competitiveness would be recognised in world markets.

Ladies and gentlemen, if we can move in this direction, no longer would we be talking about the 11,000 or 20 percent of students who sat the Grade Six Achievement Test last year and who performed below the Grade 4 level. The transformation that the Ministry has embarked on cannot be done by them alone. Parents and grandparents have a critical role to play.

We have to encourage our children to turn off the TV and read a book or the newspapers. We have to encourage our children to put down the video games and go outside and play or to get involved in a sport or extra-curricular activity which will teach them life-long values and lessons.

That is what is so encouraging about the I-Pledge programme. It's our commitment here at Grace Kennedy to not just talk. It's our commitment to act.

We look forward to this programme growing from strength to strength to make a difference where it matters most. Whether it's the technology computer learning centres

we set up in several schools last year, Reading Week or the encouragement of excellence in English language, through the various competitions – we are making a difference.

I want to encourage everyone to join us in this pledge to invest in today's children. It can only do wonders for Jamaica's tomorrow.

Thank you.