

Don Wehby
Group Chief Operating Officer
Western Union I-PLEDGE Launch
Tuesday, March 29, 2011 @ Terra Nova Hotel, 10:30 a.m.

Thank You. All protocols observed.

On behalf of Grace Kennedy, it is my privilege to officially launch the Western Union I P.L.E.D.G.E programme 2011 in support of the development of primary education in Jamaica.

Our involvement in this programme coincides with our major commitment to another activity which seeks to develop the youth of Jamaica – Boys and Girls Champs. To have Boys’ and Girls’ Champs this week followed by the I-Pledge Programme and Reading Week next week, is just a wonderful sequence for our children.

Friends, I am one of the eternal optimists who believe in the abilities of our youth to rise to the top and we must do everything in our power to provide them with the love, support and foundation to make this a reality.

I look forward to the I-Pledge programme every year because:

- It directs the country’s attention to the importance of reading
- It reinforces the need for everyone to become a stakeholder in the education process
- And it gives our staff an opportunity to interface directly with children in schools across the country and to make their day special

The Grace Kennedy group has had a long and proud history of launching and supporting initiatives which boost the self-esteem of our children and which assist our

educational institutions. Through GKRS and Western Union, I-Pledge is another of these important interventions as we realize that investing in our youth is one of the most critical policies as a leading corporation in Jamaica.

GraceKennedy is pleased that the I-Pledge programme has been extended to provide an opportunity for our youngsters to express themselves through the debating competition and from all indications, it was a very positive and fulfilling activity. There needs to be more of these interventions across the length and breadth of Jamaica because our youth need to be channeled in a direction where they can take part in discussions about the interests and future of the country.

This is important because every day new challenges emerge both locally and overseas. Since the start of 2011, we have seen major natural disasters in New Zealand and Japan and social upheaval in several countries in Northern Africa. These events have negatively impacted world economies, including Jamaica, as petrol and food prices have surged.

We now have to make the necessary adjustments to respond to these serious challenges and we must include the young people in this process. They are the ones who will ultimately shape our future and they are pivotal to any process of development and growth.

I-Pledge is really a microcosm of what Jamaica needs – a pledge and a promise from each of us to contribute positively to nation-building. It's a rallying call for us to refocus our energies from stating and restating problems, and to instead move to the important stage of problem solving and creating new opportunities.

Everyone in this room is aware of the challenges faced by the education sector. What are we going to do about it? We have two options – to keep focusing on the deficiencies; or to tackle them head on and take steps to make things better. I-Pledge is one of the steps in adopting the latter option and that is why I continue to support and

endorse this programme. What we need are other related initiatives with the same objective in order to make meaningful changes in partnership with the other stakeholders.

I look forward to seeing the benefits to be reaped from this programme in the years to come and urge everyone to give their wholehearted support. Go ahead. Make that pledge.

Thank you.