

# More than 200 years of friendship

[jamaicaobserver.com/news/more-than-200-years-of-friendship/](http://jamaicaobserver.com/news/more-than-200-years-of-friendship/)



**Colombia's ambassador to Jamaica, Jairo Clopatofsky-Ghisays, has highlighted the more than 200-year-old link between both countries as he extended best wishes to the island on its 60th anniversary of Independence.**

At the same time, Clopatofsky-Ghisays pledged his Government's commitment to strengthening relations with Jamaica in a number of areas, chief among them trade, climate action, and food security.

Additionally the Colombian diplomat, who is wheelchair-bound, said he is giving special focus to helping Jamaica enhance its inclusiveness of citizens with disabilities.

Following is an edited version of Ambassador Clopatofsky-Ghisays's message.

"It is an honour for me to be here in Jamaica as ambassador for such an important milestone for this island: It's 60th anniversary of Independence.

Many years ago, this beautiful island was the beginning of the liberating feat of our country. In 1806 Francisco Miranda set sail from Kingston at the command of 200 men aboard the *Leander* to liberate our nation. On that occasion Miranda used our flag for the first time and coined the name Colombia.

Then, in 1815 Jamaica inspired our libertador, Simón Bolívar, to write a note to a Jamaican businessman from Falmouth presenting his political project for a free and united America.

This letter, later known as the 'Carta de Jamaica' (Letter from Jamaica), inspired the revolutionary movement which led to the Independence of New Granada (now Colombia) in 1819 .

The presence of our national hero in Jamaica became the first step for a relationship which dates back to 1831 when the Republic of Colombia sent its first diplomatic delegation to the island.

Since 1965 when our nations formally established diplomatic relations, Colombia has maintained a permanent presence in Jamaica with a strong bond in our friendship — the sea. We share a maritime border making it suitable for us to promote and strengthen our commercial relations by sending food and goods directly from our ports in the Caribbean and receiving from Kingston the products Jamaica has to offer.

During the last 25 years, commercial trade between Colombia and Jamaica increased at an annualised rate of 12 per cent, from \$7.56 million in 1995 to \$129 million in 2020.

Our bond, however, goes beyond being friends and sharing a maritime border — we are brothers.

A few nautical miles from Jamaica we have a small island, San Andres, a part of Colombia where many Jamaicans have settled. The culture, traditions, food, and language (patois) are so close that you, my fellow Jamaicans, will feel at home when you visit.

I was born in Cartagena, one of our main ports in the Caribbean, so I feel proud of my Caribbean heritage.

Regardless of the language we speak, there are many things in common between our governments, private sector and our people.

As brothers we will promote more trade, more relations at the political level to enhance and defend common interests in multilateral and hemispheric fora, especially regarding climate action and food security. We also wish to have more promotion of Spanish and English as second languages in our schools and universities, more joint actions against common

threats and transnational crime, more close work between our academic institutions in many fields such as the arts, culture, medicine, agriculture, and also, work together to promote inclusive spaces and opportunities for our people.

Because of my personal experience, I am also committed to helping Jamaica become a more inclusive island for citizens with disabilities who, like many other people, can contribute to the well-being and development of this island.

There is no question that Colombia is an ally of Jamaica. We share so many things to expand our common agendas and trade opportunities. Our close relationship dates back in time linking our independence projects, vision of democracy and well-being for our peoples.

Despite the language barrier, our brotherhood joins us, not only for the past 60 years, but for many more years to come.

I would like to express my best wishes for the well-being of Jamaica and its people as I join this 60th anniversary reiterating my personal appreciation and that of my Government towards this sister nation."



Since 1965 when our nations formally established diplomatic relations, Colombia has maintained a permanent presence in Jamaica with a strong bond in our friendship.