

## **Government of Jamaica and Microsoft sign Memorandum of Understanding**

The Government of Jamaica and Microsoft Jamaica signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Monday, February 16, 2004, in a short ceremony held at the PCJ Auditorium in New Kingston. The MOU will see Microsoft offering resources to Jamaica for skills training in information and communication technology.

The Memorandum of Understanding, signed by Education Minister Hon. Maxine Henry-Wilson, Commerce, Science and Technology Hon. Minister Phillip Paulwell and Rick Marcet, General Manager of Microsoft West Indies, will see computer education being made available to children across the island at the primary and secondary school levels.

The programme dubbed 'Partners in Learning' is scheduled to commence in March 2004 and will run for the next five years. The "Partners in Learning" initiative is about investing in the future so that Jamaican students will have a better chance of turning any technological challenges into technological opportunities.

Microsoft has committed to provide free software for computers donated to the Ministry of Education and Culture through its Educational Technology Programme. Teachers and Education Ministry personnel who will supervise the process will be trained to use the software at Heart Trust/NTA and the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, where Information Technology centres will be established by Microsoft during the course of this year (2004).

Teachers will be able to access tech support and training at the centres. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Yolanda Ramos, Microsoft's Regional Education Manager, indicated that Microsoft expects to invest US\$500,000 (J\$30 million) in the programme over the 5-year period.

Already, one local company has donated 250 used computers to the Education Ministry's programme. The computers will be equipped with Microsoft's operating software, Windows98 and Windows2000.

The event was chaired by Robert Gregory, Executive Director, HEART Trust/NTA.

February 20, 2004