

# **Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell**

## **Prime Minister**

### **Independence Address**

**February 7, 2017**

Fellow Grenadians and friends of Grenada,

On this 43<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of our independence, it is my distinct honour to greet all of you, citizens and compatriots, of this our beautiful land – those here today and those around the world following us through various media.

We are celebrating this milestone at a time of increasing hope; growing expectations and deepening pride.

We have noted with interest and respect, a new energy in our land; as the ordinary people in the villages and hamlets—from the rolling hills of the interior to the plains of our shorelines—continue to do extraordinary things to advance themselves, their families and their nation.

We are satisfied that we are laying a solid foundation to create something tangible and sustainable, on which the legacy of this generation will be built; and for which the next generation will be forever grateful.

There will always be naysayers, and there will always be doubters; there will always be a small group that tries to break down what is being built up. After all, it is far easier to destroy than it is to build. But, brothers and sisters and builders, the prospects of what is to come in this Nation, positively punctuate the challenges of now.

We can put a mark against the struggles of today; for today's sacrifices are a worthy down-payment on long-term sustainable growth and entrenched Grenadian prosperity.

Sisters and brothers, this is a moment in time in which can all be proud.

The years of divisiveness and recession have been firmly put behind us because of the collective sacrifices of our people.

This is not better manifested than by the social partnership we have built with the NGOs, trade unions, churches, and businesses.

While our government has provided the general guidance – what has been achieved would not have been possible without the contribution of the leadership of all sectors.

Indeed in the last four years – and through the process – we have come to understand the meaning of patriotism. And we have been privileged to sit around the table with fellow patriots.

So let this time of our independence celebrations be the moment where once again, we not just take stock, but that we say thanks for the solidarity, the advice, the ideas and the sacrifices.

We have collectively shown that the callousness of today's international discourse does not have to infect our positive national endeavour. In this land of ours, partnership has replaced suspicion; and faith has been allowed to blossom in fields that were once fertile with mistrust.

With our social partners, we have shown that we can build a nation together – not always agreeing on everything, but always agreeing that we must not do anything to tear this nation apart. Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique must always come first.

After 43 years, our maturity should enable us to put aside partisan politics and self-interest in the name of nation-building. When something is good for this country, we must put our hearts and minds into it; regardless of who initiates the idea.

My administration has consistently called on everyone to understand this philosophy, and we have tried our best to demonstrate this example at every turn.

It is in that spirit, sisters and brothers, that the Government wholeheartedly supports the Grenada Invitational Track and Field event here in April.

As patriots, we understand that the Invitational will take track and field in Grenada to new heights, and that we all will benefit; especially our young and upcoming sports personalities, who will have an opportunity to share the athletic stage, in this first-class athletic stadium, with some of the best in the world.

Grenada will be showcased globally and for that, we owe the Invitational, and any other endeavour that is beneficial to Grenada, all the support that we can give, in the spirit of true nationalists.

Brothers and sisters, we are at the doorstep of a new Grenadian dawn.

And so we must both stay the course, and keep the faith; resisting any attempts at colorful misadventure, just as our brighter sun is rising again.

It is with this sense of collective responsibility that we look forward to all of our union leaders joining this administration and country to stay in-tune with the special compact we have built, to help close these current wage and salary negotiations and put country interest above all.

We have shown through the recent years that we have built a progressive workers' government, sensitive to the needs of the least among us.

We have embarked on a deliberate policy to lift up the most vulnerable; and to close the divide between the haves and the have-nots.

Our parliament has recently approved what essentially was a workers' budget, with benefits spread among all sectors.

But more importantly, just as we did with the Grenada Union of Teachers and others during their negotiations, we give our word that there will be more benefits to come, if the fiscal space allows for it; if we hold on a little longer; and work together for the collective good.

We continue to have financial and other responsibilities to meet to ensure that the train of progress does not run off the tracks.

In that regard, we are confident that soon we will get a comprehensive agreement with everyone in these current negotiations, because even where minor disagreements exist, the tone of the discussions has always been cordial and respectful.

And for that we salute the leadership of all the unions, who have remained mindful of the greater good of all of our citizens; even while they fight for their specific constituents.

Sisters and brothers, it must be noted that because of the tone we have set here at home, and the many successes we have had together in these last few years, the Grenadian brand has been strengthened abroad.

People across the region and indeed around the world, are increasingly look at us as a model for peace and tranquility; as a people with an unbreakable sense of respect and value; and as a progressive nation, getting better at taking care of its own people and managing its fiscal affairs.

They understand, like we do, that we are not yet finished. But we are moving – steadfastly and strikingly— in the right direction.

As we stand today, heads, hearts, and hands under the red, green and gold banner of the nutmeg and stars, we want to pay special tribute to all the people who have worn those national colors in their hearts.

At the Olympic last summer – Grenada had two finalists in the 400-meter event.

In an event long dominated by the Americans, it was the first time that a non-first world country achieved that feat.

Indeed the exploits of Kirani James, Bralin Taplin, Kurt Felix, Lindon Victor and the other Olympians, ensured that the Grenadian colors were painted in every corner of the world.

So too, have our economists and environmentalists; our artistes and artisans; our hoteliers and restaurateurs; our farmers and fisherfolk; our entrepreneurs and students; and the simple people we meet, who have not been called out by name, but who have been equally proud, equally steadfast in making a mark of significance in their corner of the world. I say to you, today is your day.

The mothers who cradle this nation; and the fathers who understand their responsibility to family and country—today is your day.

That Grenadian spirit unites us all; an unbreakable and resilient spirit that cannot be undermined by personal preferences.

The unity that we preached on the very night we took office, was not meant to be a political stunt, but a serious policy for the advancement of our people.

And as we push on with that policy, we hope more can see the vision.

Our history has taught us that we must never be afraid to dream.

Julien Fedon dreamt; Donovan and Marrayshow dreamt; Eric Gairy and Maurice Bishop dreamt too.

Let this land forever be a land of dreamers; because it is from those dreams, that exciting and sustained Grenadian realities are born.

Happy Independence, Grenada. This is, indeed, your day!

I thank you very much.