

**STATEMENT BY
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AT LAUNCH OF DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL PLAN 2030

May 27, 2015

Salutations:

Introduction

“Let our advance worrying become advance thinking and planning”. These are the words of Winston Churchill, former British Prime Minister.

In the Throne Speech delivered by Her Excellency the Governor General, last October, Government signaled its intent to proceed with the development of a long term national plan.

The impetus for a National Plan, at this time, comes from our Social Partners who in the process of intense and sustained dialogue have called for such a Plan.

Our Government has listened.

Today, we embark on an important journey to make this call a reality.

In 2008, a global commission on Growth and Development chaired by Nobel Laureate Mike Spence published **The Growth Report: Strategies for Sustained Growth and Inclusive Development**.

Having reviewed the performance of a wide cross section of countries, the Commission found five striking points in some of the most successful countries:

1. They fully exploited the global economy;
2. They maintained macroeconomic stability;
3. They mustered high rates of savings and investment;
4. They let markets allocate resources (private sector led growth); and
5. They had committed, credible and capable Governments (including a well-trained and motivated Public Service)

The Report also pointed out a simple mathematical fact which is that at an average rate of 7 percent per year, an economy almost doubles in size every decade.

This fact puts in perspective the kind of growth levels, Grenada requires to fundamentally tackle the scourge of poverty and high unemployment and attain our Sustainable Development Goals.

Over the past two years, we have seen unemployment fall in Grenada from 40% to 29.5%, as a consequence of growth of 3.1% in 2013 and 2.6% in 2014. Grenada's return to growth is encouraging especially when compared with regional peers and the period 2009-2012. That said, higher growth levels are needed.

National Plan 2030 must seek to raise Grenada's growth trajectory over a sustained period. Moreover, this growth must be broad-based and inclusive touching urban and rural communities such as River Road and River Sallee as well as Beaulieu and Belle Isle.

The Growth Commission also observed that effective government requires patience and a long planning horizon.

Brothers and sisters, the power of a plan cannot be doubted.

Successful small countries like Singapore and Mauritius all attest to the power of not just developing a long term plan but sticking to the Plan.

As we embark on the road to National Plan 2030, our Government is committed to a fully transparent and participatory process.

The Plan, by design, must be homegrown. Indeed, it can be no other way.

However, this Plan is not about structural adjustment. Instead, it is about structural transformation and the prosperity of all citizens.

This Plan will serve this Nation long after some of us in Government have ended our period of service and moved on.

For this reason, the Cabinet was very clear that the National Steering Committee ought to include the main political parties. Consequently, invitations were issued to the National Democratic Congress, the National United Front and the New National Party.

Consistent with our inclusive approach since the commencement of this term in office, our Social Partners have also been invited to nominate representatives to the National Steering Committee.

Yes, brothers and sisters, this Plan must transcend electoral cycles.

Indeed, party manifestos will need to be checked for alignment with the National Plan thereby minimizing the risk of any new Government “starting from scratch”.

To use a cricketing analogy: anyone who comes to the wicket of Government, to bat, must face this Plan.

Of course, it will be up to the Nation to hold Government accountable in this regard.

As we embark on this journey, we must cast a clear and compelling vision of what could be and should be for this dear Land we call home.

Many questions must be examined including the following:

What type of citizen do we wish to raise in this Country?

Is our education system structured to help produce the citizens our Country desires and needs?

For example, should we continue with an education system that graduates our students with many subjects but little or no skills? A disconnect between the education system and the labour market.

Do we wish to perpetuate a system and culture where certification rather than character building is the foremost priority?

I wish to be clear these questions are not an indictment on our teachers. Instead, it is a call for introspection of our education system as we chart the way forward.

Brothers and sisters,

It is mind boggling that in a time when our region has so many qualified people, productivity may well be at an all-time low in the Caribbean.

We must take steps to address this state of affairs.

Today, not everyone who is employed is working.

How do we ensure that people are not merely employed but are in engaged decent and meaningful work?

How do we change mindsets?

Consider this account of a man who at age 40 had his own home, a wife and two daughters. He also had an apartment. All of this with only a City and Guilds certificate in Automotive Engineering.

In contrast, his daughters now in their thirties (one with a Master's degree and the younger with a Bachelor's degree) were still, as he termed it, "squatting" at home and had nothing – no assets, only liabilities.

What has changed?

Food for thought and serious reflection.

This Plan must also embrace our commitment to bring down the cost of electricity and raise the level of renewables in our energy mix such that we can spur growth and job creation. I addressed this issue more fully on previous occasions.

I am pleased to hear the voice of our youth expressed here today.

We must support our youth. We must give them hope.

That is why, our Government has provided opportunities for 3,000 young persons to receive life skills, certification and work experience. This Programme is costly but we view it as an investment in our Nation.

If we lose our youth, we lose our future.

Our Plan must consider how to harness the creative talent and energies of our youth.

Our Plan must also determine how we unleash the entrepreneurial spirit of our People.

Our Plan must promote an orientation that encourages our youth to create their own employment.

The role of Government must be clearly defined. For example, I do not believe, it is the job of Government to create jobs for everyone. Instead, Government ought to create the enabling environment for private sector-led growth.

I believe, our Country requires smaller Government and a bigger private sector.

Equally then, the role of the private sector must be clearly defined.

So too must be the role of Civil Society, in the broadest sense.

Taping our Diaspora is critical.

The diaspora is more than the millions of dollars in remittances received each year. It is also about bringing their technical, financial and managerial networks to bear to speed up our national development.

As a small State, Grenada will need technical and financial support to develop and implement this Plan. We invite our traditional partners (old and new) to join us in this endeavor and thank those such as China which have already expressed commitment to help us.

Brothers and sisters,

My intention today has not been to prescribe the Plan but to provoke our thinking as we embark on this journey to National Plan 2030.

However, before I conclude, let me leave you with a simple picture what could be for our Country.

For sustained prosperity, I see:

- Sustainable and equitable development
- Sound fiscal management and sustainability
- Manageable debt
- Smaller, more efficient and effective government
- Private sector led growth
- A world class service industry especially in tourism
- Continued innovation and upgrading of Agriculture along the value chain
- Efficient light manufacturing sector
- High quality, market demand driven technical and vocational skills
- Lifelong learning for all citizens
- High wage employment
- Vibrant innovation, knowledge accumulation and dissemination
- Adaptation and application of information and communication technologies in all aspects of development
- Green businesses, industries and lifestyles
- Highly productive and internationally competitive export sectors
- A sustainable mix of traditional and renewable energy

In conclusion, I wish to thank you for making the effort to be here today.

This is our Country, our future.

Let us go forth and build a bold and beautiful Plan.

May God bless Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique.