

Most Gracious Speech To Both Houses of Parliament



By
His Excellency
The Governor-General

ON THURSDAY, THE SEVENTEENTH OF SEPTEMBER, 2009

THRONE SPEECH 2009:

**Delivered to the
Houses of Parliament**

**By
His Excellency Sir Carlyle Glean Snr.,
GCMG, QC,
Governor-General**

**On the occasion of the Second Session
of the Eighth Parliament**

September 17, 2009

Madam President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament

On the occasion of the commencement of the Second Session of the Eighth Parliament, my Government affirms its commitment to democracy, good governance, transparency, accountability and the rule of law.

Fourteen months ago, our Nation chose a different direction.

Our Nation embarked on a journey to restore integrity, hope and a brighter tomorrow.

This journey has not been easy.

Our small and young Nation is fighting for its rightful place in the league of nations.

Our individual and collective faith in God has been and continues to be tested but it is in times of adversity that our faith is strengthened and renewed.

The Legislative Agenda

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

During this session, my Government will pursue an ambitious legislative agenda which will include:

1. Insurance
2. Cooperative Societies
3. Public Procurement
4. OECS Economic Union Treaty
5. Intellectual Property

Economic Management

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

My Government convenes the Second Session of the Eighth Parliament in challenging times.

The current challenges faced by Caribbean countries are unprecedented in scope and complexity. There is no comparable period in the recent history of the world. The global recession has had adverse consequences for the economies of our region. Declines in foreign direct investment, remittances, grants, exports and declining government's revenues have all exacerbated the fragility and vulnerability of OECS economies. Despite this difficult environment, we have been able to steady the ship and lay the basis for improved economic management.

My Government affirms its commitment to stronger economic management since good economic management is an important prerequisite for sustained economic growth and prosperity. In this regard, my Government will continue to implement the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility with the International Monetary Fund as part of the commitment to strengthening economic management and mobilizing budget support and technical assistance.

Further, in the context of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, my Government will implement the Eight Point Stabilisation and Growth Programme which was presented to the people of the sub-region in July of this year.

My Government will pursue strategies that optimize revenue, minimize expenditure and ensure better value for money spent. One area of special focus will be the implementation of Value Added Tax in 2010.

Further, more concerted actions will be taken to identify and minimize waste in Government. The public will be asked to play an important role utilizing the waste hotline already established and the newly created Office of the Ombudsman.

Central to the successful achievement of our economic management programme is our ongoing public sector reform

initiatives. These initiatives are designed to improve our levels of effectiveness and efficiency as we strive to deliver quality goods and services to our citizens.

Enhancing Social Dialogue

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

My Government reaffirms its commitment to the principle of partnership in national development.

A review of the history of some of the most successful small states reveals that at some juncture, the social partners came together in common cause and entered a social partnership. The pace and scope of national development in these countries have been significant.

In this period of unprecedented challenges, these experiences should motivate us to emulate those successful small countries.

In this regard, my Government will continue efforts to conclude a social protocol with all Social Partners.

My Government regards this social protocol as a key instrument of governance for our Nation in these challenging economic times.

Improving the Business Climate

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

My Government is committed to an economy of private sector led growth. In this regard, Government sees its role as providing the enabling environment and incentives for the private sector to create jobs, contribute to government revenue and create wealth.

My Government intends to position Grenada as one of the most business friendly countries in the Caribbean. To this end, my Government will implement reforms to reduce the time it takes to

do business with Government in areas such as the Grenada Industrial Development Corporation, Customs and the Registry of Companies.

Financial Regulation

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

My Government recognizes the need to protect depositors and investors in the financial sector. One of the key lessons of the recent financial crisis is the need for better regulation of financial institutions.

In this regard, my Government recognizes the significant strides made by the Grenada Authority for the Regulation of Financial Institutions (GARFIN) in its role as regulator and supervisor of insurance companies, credit unions, money transfer agencies and building societies among others. My Government will continue to support these efforts through stronger legislation and international cooperation.

Further steps will be taken to improve regional cooperation including due diligence, information exchange and technical assistance to minimize risk to the domestic financial system.

Greater emphasis will also be placed on public education and financial literacy.

My Government will continue to invest in the local capacity to contribute to the global fight against money laundering and terrorist financing and will continue its policy of international cooperation on these challenges.

Tourism

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

The Tourism sector offers considerable promise for improving the economic fortunes of Grenada despite the fact that the Caribbean is currently experiencing a very traumatic period. Massive layoffs of staff, staff rotations, short- and medium-term closures characterize the industry in the region. Given this industry scenario, and the fact that Grenada is still recovering from the impact of two hurricanes, the sector has been demonstrating considerable resilience.

My Government will continue to work and collaborate with the sector to ensure adaptation to the current conditions and to position the sector for early action when the industry's fortunes rebound.

As part of its commitment to expand our hotel room stock, my Government is working closely with investors to find innovative and novel ways to activate their projects that have stalled due to changing market conditions. With the assistance of friendly governments and multilateral institutions, my Government will continue to leverage our excellent relationship and facilitate investor and funding contacts to assist those projects.

My Government has made progress in expanding airlift to Grenada including direct services to selected cities in North America and Europe. My Government will continue to pursue these arrangements.

My Government will continue to focus on and invest in product development including community attractions while at the same time pursuing target marketing of our destination. Our current offering which is buttressed by the hospitality of our people is unique. My Government will seek to preserve this uniqueness, particularly as we will be continuing our investment in the development of community tourism around the country.

In the medium term, my Government will continue to focus on establishing Grenada as the dive capital of the Eastern Caribbean and to position our country as a preferred cruise destination.

Recognizing the absolute necessity for world class service in this industry, my Government has identified training in hospitality and

entertainment as a priority. In this regard, training will be delivered under the auspices of the recently established National Training Agency.

Agriculture

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

The recent world crises including the food crisis, have confirmed to world leaders and multilateral organizations that agricultural development is critical for enhancing rural livelihoods, reducing poverty and generating economic growth.

Given the role that agriculture plays in economic development, particularly in the rural communities, my Government is fully committed to providing the enabling environment to facilitate the rehabilitation and modernization of the sector. This approach is expected to improve farmers' incomes, encourage private sector investment, increase foreign exchange earnings and strengthen Grenada's food security status.

As a result, my Government has aggressively undertaken several initiatives to improve the profile of agriculture and to reinvigorate confidence in the farming community once more. Some of these initiatives include:

- a. development of an Agriculture Strategic Plan for resuscitating agriculture;
- b. development of a Nutmeg and Spices Strategic Plan;
- c. the development of a Food Security Strategic Plan;
- d. revision and implementation of a range of targeted agricultural support programmes, namely: the farm labour programme, the propagation programme, and the farm machinery (ploughing services) programme; and

- e. improvement and intensification of the food security programme.

This has resulted in a marked increase in agricultural production especially nutmegs and cocoa. For the year 2010, my Government will continue to provide support to all stakeholders focusing on the following areas:

1. Improving the enabling environment for private sector participation for value addition of agricultural commodities. In that regard, WIBDECO will shortly take over operations of the La Sagesse Agro Processing Plant. Baron Foods is also in the process of establishing operations in the St. Andrew's area;
2. Strengthening the package of support to the agricultural sector by:
 - continuing to facilitate the timely access to high quality inputs including fertilizer;
 - continuing and expanding the farm labour support programme through the strengthening of the farm machinery pool to provide improved support for land preparation, drainage and soil conservation activities;
 - intensifying activities to reduce praedial larceny by increasing the pace of registering of farmers and vendors and the strengthening of community farm watch groups;
 - improving farm roads infrastructure through increased road rehabilitation and road maintenance works;
3. Improving efforts to increase production and productivity in the livestock sector through the intensification of the artificial insemination programme, the development of a commercial dairy goat industry, improvement of the indigenous poultry breeds,

increasing the availability of young animals through the Laura Livestock Multiplication Farm and the development of a commercial hay production industry;

4. Increasing in a more strategic and aggressive manner our commitment to support the reform and modernization of Nutmeg, Cocoa and Spice industries in Grenada. To date the Government has approved the Nutmeg and Spice Strategic Plan and reconfigured the Merger Committee to help facilitate that transformation. For the first time, Grenada will host a National Spice Festival to highlight the importance of the spice industry to Grenada's economy but more importantly to encourage and inspire confidence in the industry and increase Grenada's image as the Spice Island of the Caribbean;
5. Improving the production and productivity of the Government-owned estates;
6. Improving the fisheries infrastructure to increase overall fish quality standards. The Gouyave Fisheries Complex project would commence and improved laboratory facilities would be provided to ensure fish quality testing.

Human Resource Development

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

My Government views our human resource as our most valuable national asset. This asset must be developed if we are to achieve our goal of building a 21st Century Grenada that must offer to the World, a competitive Tourist Product, Business Opportunities, Yachting Facilities, agro based products and other quality products and services. As a result, my Government intends to continue to reorient our educational system.

Our improvement and refocus of the curriculum in 2009 will be followed by an emphasis on improving our educational facilities in the year 2010. Further, my Government will continue to emphasize the acquisitions of skills training to incorporate new areas and “soft skills”. These areas include the Performing Arts, Physical Education, Sports, the Visual Arts and personal skills like Positive Attitudes, Team Building, Communication Skills, Values, Conflict Resolution, Anger Management and Critical Thinking.

My Government intends to continue on the expansion plans for the T.A. Marryshow Community College (TAMCC) and to support it as the premier tertiary education institution for Grenada. Additionally, my Government is accelerating plans to develop a U.W.I. Open Campus Facility here in Grenada that would accommodate not only degree programmes but would offer research facilities for Master's and Doctoral Dissertations.

Youth Empowerment

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

My Government is committed to positioning our youth as key stakeholders in our Nation and enabling them to contribute to social balance through family support and community service. The valued goals of youth empowerment will be achieved through the implementation of the following programmes, among others:

The Grenada Youth Upliftment Programme (GYUP) which consists of Four (4) Components:

The first component is the Grenada Youth Education and Training Programme (GYET) which is the flagship programme and consists of the Skill Certification Programme, inclusive of Agriculture; the Education Enhancement Programme, which provides the opportunity for participants to attain the requisite academic qualifications and the Personal Development Programme which caters to the Life Skills needs of participants.

.The second component is the Youth Rehabilitation Programme. It will focus on meeting the psychological needs of youths 'at risk' and in conflict with the law; young women through a women empowerment programme and young prisoners.

Thirdly, there is the Small Business Enterprise Programme. This is a restart of the Grenada Youth Enterprise Initiative (GYEI) Programme. It will provide young people with training in creating and managing their own businesses and facilitate access to financing following the completion of training and the preparation of business plans.

Fourthly, there is the Youth Leadership Programme. This is an interactive programme geared towards the general development of the youth. Some of the activities include the Youth Parliament, which is currently in progress; Youth Month, The National Youth Ambassador Programme; observance of significant international dates such as International Youth Day, CARICOM Day and Commonwealth Day; and working with and strengthening existing youth groups and stakeholders such as the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Girl Guides, Cadet Corps and Scouts.

Sports

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

In keeping with our recognition of sports as a significant contributor to the health, wellness and productivity of our society, my Government is committed to strengthening the sporting infrastructure and programmes of the country.

My Government will focus on the completion and implementation of a National Sports Policy to guide the governance of sports, improve the management and maintenance of our playing fields, develop and rehabilitate a number of playing facilities around the country and continue work on the Aquatic Centre. My Government will also work closely with the Ministry of Education to ensure that

Physical Education and Sports are taught at all schools in Grenada and will introduce national awards to recognize outstanding national Athletes, administrators and employees.

Culture

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

My Government is implementing a diversified cultural calendar for the year 2010. This calendar includes the Grenada Independence Festival (GIF), a National Pan Festival, the Spice Island Festival of Words and the Camerhogne Celebration of Grenadian Folk Culture. Work on the National Film Commission and the repositioning of the Grenada Cultural Foundation has already started.

New initiatives in the education curriculum will usher in the teaching of new cultural art forms in our schools. My Government's recognition of Indian Arrival Day and the greater emphasis being placed on our Emancipation Celebrations is consistent with my Government's policy to appreciate our historical and cultural legacy.

Health

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

Improved health care and its availability to the Grenadian public is a priority on my Government's agenda. During the next year, my Government will place emphasis on the following areas:

- (1) A renewed Public Health Care Strategy.
- (2) Health Care Financing.
- (3) Development of our human resource capacity and strengthening of our Health Care System.

Primary Health Care at the community level is the first step in the continuum of care. Our statistics indicate an increase in the burden of illness, specifically in the chronic, non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, cancer and mental disorders. My Government has also witnessed an increase in the disease burden as it relates to communicable diseases and in particular, H.I.V/AIDS and H1N1 Influenza A Virus.

My Government will initiate a community based response in addition to other initiatives taken at our hospitals.

Accordingly, my Government will be embarking on a vigorous and renewed National Health Promotion Campaign strategy aimed at prevention, the reduction of health risks and behavioural change in the population. Community participation, individual responsibility for one's health and the involvement of children are critical success factors for this strategy.

Health care financing is critical if we are to significantly improve the quality of our service. A multi-sectoral committee has been set up to review health financing through a National Health Insurance Scheme. Additionally, my Government is in the process of legislating fees and ensuring that the Billing and Admissions System is in place for collection of fees.

My Government intends to hold public consultation on the financing of health care.

My Government will also focus on the Development of our Health Information Systems, our Health Personnel, New Policies, Legislation and Disaster Management.

My Government will also pursue Public, Private Partnerships in the provision of Dialysis and Oncology Services. Further, my Government will explore the feasibility of a new hospital under a similar arrangement.

Trade

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

My Government's active and aggressive participation in negotiations of multilateral and regional Free Trade Agreements is of critical and fundamental importance in securing our trade and development agenda. Currently, Grenada is signatory to the several regional and multilateral trading agreements which include CARICOM, the World Trade Organization and the recently signed European Union – CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement.

Over the next year, my Government will continue with the implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement, for which an EPA Implementation Unit is being established. The Trade and Export Development Division will continue to work closely with the private sector to ensure that opportunities created through improved market access is efficiently exploited.

My Government will access funding in 2010 under the EPA implementation to address supply side challenges that touch both the physical and soft infrastructural dimensions.

My Government will also continue to participate in the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization and the new round of negotiations of the CARICOM-Canada Summit.

Legislation to establish a National Export Council is being developed with assistance from the Legal Department. The National Export Council will be responsible for the management and implementation of the National Export Strategy in all sectors and across sectors, including Ministries.

My Government's Trade Information Strategy will be implemented with support from the World Bank to include a comprehensive Trade Information System for all export sectors thus taking information to the reach of all exporters.

My Government further recognizes the contribution of self employed persons to the development of the country. The Ministry of Environment, Foreign Trade and Export Development has been working closely with the Traffickers Association to ensure that in achieving their livelihood, the obligations of the Government to regional and international agreements are respected.

Housing

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

My Government is committed to the provision of safe and affordable housing to improve the standard of living of our people. Decent housing is essential for normal family life.

Accordingly, my Government will focus on the identification of suitable land to support housing development, acquiring the necessary financial resources, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of land and property management and the strengthening of the management of the sector.

In pursuit of the above, my Government will build relationships with all the necessary stakeholders and friendly governments. Emphasis will be placed on building houses for low income families with assistance from China and Venezuela.

Foreign Affairs

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

Active engagement with the global community is the hallmark of Grenada's foreign policy. This is strategic yet prudent as my Government seeks to mobilize resources necessary to achieve our social and economic development goals.

My Government will continue to deepen bilateral relations with Caricom countries, the Peoples' Republic of China, Venezuela, the

European Union Canada, USA, Cuba, Brazil, India, South Africa and many of our Latin American neighbours.

My Government will continue to maintain effective representation and to participate fully in multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, the Organization of American States, the OECS and Caricom.

The imperative of regional integration is urgent as our economies particularly in the OECS are inextricably linked. This has been made more telling by the current economic recession and its impact on our economies. Consequently, my Government will actively pursue the deepening of the integration process as my Government strives to improve the overall well being of our people. Specifically, my Government will do its part to make the OECS Economic Union a reality.

In fulfillment of our policy to meaningfully embrace the Grenadian diaspora worldwide, my Government will aggressively pursue the objectives of the recently created Diaspora Unit. My Government intends to integrate all Grenadians wherever they are into the governance of our Country.

Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

Carriacou has been progressing along the path to effective local government. So far the island has been divided into zonal councils and an interim advisory council will shortly be in place.

At the same time, the rationalization and restructuring of the Ministry of Carriacou Affairs to improve its operational efficiency is proceeding. Emphasis is now being placed on a number of infrastructural projects including the resurfacing of the Airport which will be renamed in February, 2010 on the birthday of the late former Prime Minister H. A. Blaize.

In keeping with my Government's goal to ensure the careful management of the delicate environment in Carriacou, environmental wardens will be engaged to assist in the monitoring and enforcement of relevant policies.

Environmental Sustainability

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

Climate change is a planetary emergency that threatens the survival of many Small Island States like Grenada. My Government recognizes this and is playing a pivotal leadership role as chairman of the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) in the current negotiations leading up to the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change in December, 2009.

The world is already experiencing the effects of global warming, and small islands like Grenada will find it increasingly difficult to continue socio-economic activities as sea levels rise, as sea water intrude our coastal aquifers, as coral reefs are destroyed and hurricanes get stronger. Despite the fact that small islands contribute less than 0.49 percent of green house gases, my Government is implementing policies geared at achieving environmental sustainability.

In that respect my Government has completed a draft sustainable energy plan. This plan focuses on conservation, energy efficiency and an optimal mix of renewable and non renewable sources of energy.

Conclusion

Madam President, Mr. Speaker

My Government will continue to implement a rigorous programme of efficient economic management that will chart a course of sustained economic growth and prosperity for our Nation.

The success of this programme in the current challenging environment will depend on the commitment and concerted effort of all Grenadians as we seek to execute our plans and build our Country.

Our work continues to be underpinned by our resolute commitment to the principles and practices of good governance which demands transparency, accountability, and respect for the law, honesty and humility. This we reiterate is a necessary precondition for our social and economic development.

My Government looks forward to a productive Parliament as together we collaborate to build our beloved homeland.

May God bless our Nation.

