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**INDEPENDENCE MESSAGE – CELEBRATING 38 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE**



Thirty eight years ago, the Government and people of our dearly beloved country, after a period marked by great struggle, threw off the chains of colonial domination and became a proud and independent member of the international community.

Those of us who were aware at that time would very well remember the trials and tribulations that the Government and people had to endure as a result of the unpatriotic activities of detractors and naysayers.

Over the years so far, since the achievement of this milestone, in general we have been able to live up to the true meaning of independence. Like all nations of the world, we have had problems and setbacks and like all successful nations we have been able to face up to the demands and responsibilities of nationhood.

But while we remain proud of the positive trends and developments, it will be unwise to fail to take notice of the undesirable and negative practices that sometimes occur reflecting an insidious attempt to adopt the divide and rule tactics that were employed by our former colonial masters. Our present leaders must always be mindful to reject such practices as they represent a return to the days when people were relegated to second class status on the basis of their skin colour, wealth and income, educational status, religious and political affiliation. As a nation we must live our creed of 'One people, One Nation under God and we must work unrelentingly to ensure that the walls which divide us are completely torn down as a means towards guaranteeing liberty, justice and equality for all

For the rights for which many of our fore parents fought and died and the freedoms we now enjoy because of their sacrifices must never be taken for granted. History has shown us that people who became complacent and failed to exercise due diligence and vigilance have fallen victim to dictatorship. They have lost the freedoms they took for granted. On this the thirty eight anniversary of our hard earned independence, I urge us all to remember the statement of the great writer who said that 'the price of freedom is eternal vigilance'. Because of

our specific experiences, we the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, have good reason to be ever mindful-and watchful.

Let us as a people reflect on what we are doing at present with a view to determining where we are failing and where we are succeeding. We must resolve to make all necessary corrections in a quest to put things right in the interest of our country and people. And above all we must be gracious and thankful, to and for those who have helped and guided us along the way, for in a very real sense, they are the Lord's instruments. As we all know all good things come from the Lord.

Fellow Grenadians, the true meaning of independence is the ability of a people to effectively manage their political and economic affairs. Unfortunately, recent developments in our country puts this maxim under threat, for what we are now experiencing is an acidic mixture of political confusion and economic retardation that puts at risk our very ability to survive as a nation. If this trend continues, before long we shall not be able to stand on our own two feet among the community of nations. We shall become like people wandering in the wilderness, seeking to be rescued.

But we are a resilient people. Though we are down we will rise again. Yes the time is coming when we will again be able to stand tall among the nations of the world and reaffirm both our identity and our progressive character.

And so ladies and Gentlemen, fellow citizens of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, I use this opportunity to call upon each and every one to give this matter of our independence the serious consideration and reflection it truly deserve and in the same spirit of oneness and togetherness so aptly enshrined in our National Anthem and Pledge, to renew our commitment to nation building.

I pledge my own contribution and that of my party to this process as well as the goal of building a healthy, educated, united and prosperous people and nation.

May God bless us all and keep us united and strong!!