



## **Address by Prime Minister Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell**

### **On the Occasion of Grenada's 44<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence**

**7 February 2018**

**Ladies and gentlemen....**

**Fellow Grenadians, Carriacouans and Petite Martiniquans,**

**Patriots, all...**

On this 44<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence, we stand here today proud and inspired about our place in the world; inspired by the journey of our forefathers in the fight for our national liberation as a people and country.

This current generation of Grenadians who have inherited the victories and achievements from slavery to independence, has carried the torch of social progress valiantly over the course of these past years—even more determined to consolidate the foundation for a future of which the next generation will be proud.

On every occasion like this, we must pause, as a nation – to take stock – and to set out a new path for the future.

The experiences of the first 44 years have made us even more ready to write the next chapter.

This nation - inspired by heroes and built by champions - is rising. Our path is upwards, and we shall not put any limits to the possibilities of which we dream.

We are not the largest nation in the world. Far from it. We are not the strongest nation in the world. Far from it. But we are among the proudest.

And every time history or nature knocks us down, we rise up. We stand up – and we grow up. Our past has built us to last. And now, we are confident that this is the era of a Grenada renaissance. Don't count the future against us – because we are determined to make it ours. Any nation that can give the world heroes such as Julien Fedon, T.A. Marryshow, Eric Matthew Gairy and Maurice Bishop, cannot be counted out.

Any country that gives the world champions as Alleyne Francique, Kirani James, Bralon Taplin and Kurt Felix, can in no way be counted out.

Any country that gives the world movers and shakers as Henri Christopher and Tubal Uriah Butler must have a worthy place in this universe.

Merle Collins, Alister Hughes, Leslie Pierre, George Brizan, and the Mighty Sparrow have used their various platforms to tell our story to the world.

It is of this rich history from whence we came; an indomitable spirit washed clean by our pristine waters and infused with our spices.

And so, we have every reason to celebrate as we gather here today; and our many compatriots scattered around the globe can take their place with pride and honour.

And as we celebrate; we also remember.

The colour of the skies might have changed from red to blue; and the force of our governance comes not from bullets but ballots; but the dreams that gave rise to past struggles still endure.

Hunger for freedom is never dated. Yearning for progress is never stale. And every new ground we take – we still yearn for more; for genuine greatness is never achieved, but always pursued.

Today, we pause to remember all those who joined Sir Eric in the struggle for Grenada's freedom and social progress.

Aptly so, we remember Mrs. Cynthia Gairy, the first female parliamentarian, who recently passed away. We salute her and those who did not make it to this day to witness this 44th anniversary, but who were instrumental in getting us here. We salute them all and we thank them for their sacrifices and their vision.

Those of us here on this Grenada's 44th, must take this country forward with the commitment and determination of those gone before. But we must also take it forward with the deep and abiding sense of responsibility that befits our roles as one people, and one nation.

We must take this country forward in unity of purpose, patriotism, sacrifice, hard work, and with a vision for its sustainability.

This country has changed, is changing and can continue to change for the better, but we have to keep moving forward with this enduring belief and commitment—toward an even brighter tomorrow.

We must, therefore, avoid risking this once again successful experiment on speculations, promises and innuendos and character assassinations.

Instead, we must celebrate the gains we have made and work toward consolidating them.

Security of our country is our continued priority, and we continue to be proud of the work done in ensuring that our shores remain safe and that Grenada continues to be a choice destination for travelers and a haven for locals. There can be no price attached to that.

Today, we celebrate peace.

This nation has come together in the last few years to rise out of economic stagnation. The Social Compact among the Government, Churches, Trade Unions, Business Community, Non-governmental Organisations and civil society, has been a model tool, demonstrating what can be achieved when we join hands across this Nation.

Today, on this 44th anniversary, we celebrate unity and we call on all to join that unity train.

When this administration assumed office in 2013, we met an economy that was experiencing negative growth of -2% year on year, for most of the preceding period.

Since then, with the use of proper fiscal management, the cooperation from our social partners and the subsequent stimulation of investor confidence, this country has been able to experience positive growth, averaging approximately 5% over the last five years.

Our national debt has been substantially slashed from 108% of our Gross Domestic Product to 69%, enabling our ability to service that debt and still meet our commitments to our citizens.

Our unemployment levels have been substantially reduced from over 40% to 24%.

Today, our nation and its people are reaping the rewards of sacrifice.

The seeds sown by hard toil and sweat are beginning to bear a bountiful harvest of which all must share.

The Structural Adjustment Programme and the ensuing success of Grenada had everything to do with the social compact among the Churches, Trade Unions, Business community, Non-governmental organizations and civil society.

But in five years, some of our political opponents refused to participate in it despite repeated requests to join.

This is why today, we call on them to commit publicly to be part of the social compact after the next election, and to help to deepen and expand it.

Those of us who answered the call in the last five years were not afraid to make the tough decisions, because we knew that in spite of the challenges, Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique must always come before self. Country first.

Today, we celebrate patriotism.

Today, the poor and socially disadvantaged of the country are joining the main stream and we are all moving toward the path of progress.

We have taken this Nation on a new path of development, and we are doing everything possible to leave no one behind.

Our elderly, poor and vulnerable citizens have hope again.

They are being provided for; they are being remembered.

So too are the workers and their trade Unions who have made tremendous strides in their rights to work, and earnings from their employment, with the various constructive and progressive policy initiatives of this Government.

We are building our young people to be empowered with technology, to be job creators and not job seekers.

We are developing our productive sectors to ensure that farmers can sleep in peace, knowing that their passion is their livelihood; that they can make a decent living in agriculture.

We are expanding in manufacturing and tourism, and in the process, we are creating an environment for the diversity of labour and interests.

Our resolve is to build a country which provides the necessary opportunities for the fulfillment of dreams, especially among our young people.

Our resolve is to continue to build a country that can withstand external shocks, such as those that come with climate change and other man-made disasters.

Our resolve is to pass on such a country to our children and grandchildren.

Our resolve is to show that we can achieve all of this together, because we have come this far in such a short time by doing it together.

The teacher must join hands with the fisherman to share knowledge; the entrepreneur must meet the needy half way; the elderly must counsel the young; the leaders must extend hands across the aisles; and the doctors, nurses and other health professionals must care for the sick.

This is the Grenadian dream that was envisioned 44 years ago, and the one for which we work today.

That is the National Patriotic Grenadian Project that has had this administration fighting for you for the last five years.

That is the Grenadian dream that we must work to preserve, and not be tempted to steer into uncertainty.

Finally, brothers and sisters, as citizens, while we justly reap the rewards of our collective efforts, we must also be prepared to carry out our civic responsibilities in just over a month, to ensure that our constitutional right to participate in our democracy is taken seriously.

Every eligible citizen should, to the fullest extent of those rights, engage his or her universal right of suffrage, so as to determine and influence our path to continued prosperity and progress.

We cannot go backwards now, ladies and gentlemen. We must stay the course, for the future beckons.

Fellow countrymen; families; friends all – Happy Independence everyone!

I thank you.