



Welcome Remarks

On the Occasion of the Visit of His Royal
Highness, The Prince of Wales

By

Honourable Allen M. Chastanet,

**Prime Minister & Minister for Finance, Economic
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Sunday 17th March 2019

Your Royal Highness,

It is with great pleasure that I formally welcome you to Saint Lucia and convey how honoured we all are by your presence.

This visit is of great significance coming at the start of a tour of the wider Caribbean that will take you to no less than 10 countries over the next 12 days.

We are grateful that your visit to our country coincides with our ongoing 40th Independence anniversary celebrations. We are equally honoured that this is your third visit to Saint Lucia. The first being in 1989 when you celebrated our 10th anniversary with us.

In 2008 you returned and visited the scenic south western town of Soufriere. We recall with fondness the special interest which Your Royal Highnesses exhibited at that time in Saint Lucia's efforts towards the development of eco-tourism. An example of our success in such projects is the Fond Doux Plantation, where a 19th century colonial estate has been transformed into a magnificent resort that has been winning top international awards for our country.

We note that this current tour is being undertaken in celebration of the Monarchy's relationship with the Commonwealth Realms in this region.

Saint Lucia continues to cherish and benefit from its long standing relationship with the monarchy which has taken this island from colonialism through Associated Statehood and now Independence.

As a member of the Commonwealth of Nations we subscribe to the principles of international cooperation and to the advancement of economic and social development; human rights, democracy and, in particular, the rule of law.

As I look out on the bright-eyed school children here with us today, I am reminded that our small country has a very youthful population and we are encouraged by the increasing importance of young people in the Commonwealth.

We were elated and so proud with the recent news that our own Mr. Dujon was awarded the Commonwealth Youth Award for 2019 in London.

Mr. Dujon is an inspiring story for all our Saint Lucian people. He has developed a process to transform sargassum seaweed to a high-quality fertilizer; which he now exports to other countries in the Caribbean; and hopefully soon to the wider Commonwealth and other countries of the world. Congratulations to Mr Dujon and thank you to the Commonwealth for recognizing the talents and innovation of our young people.

As a country, we were delighted in 2016 when His Royal Highness Prince Henry of Wales, on his first official visit to our beautiful island home, officially launched the Queen's Commonwealth Canopy.

Your Royal Highness, despite my defeat by your son, Prince Harry, during the cricket match between us at the Daren Sammy stadium *(A loss that I personally attribute only to the famous and immense hospitality of the people of Saint Lucia. Let's just say I played my part in that hospitality)* . . . our nation and particularly our youth, continue to cherish the memories and historical significance of the visit of Prince Henry of Wales to Saint Lucia.

We recognise the positive and active role and contributions of young people in promoting development, peace, democracy and in protecting and promoting other Commonwealth values, such as tolerance and understanding, including respect for other cultures.

These values have become even more acute given the recent horrific events in New Zealand.

We ask that Your Royal Highness convey once again the people of Saint Lucia's solidarity with our Commonwealth brothers and sisters in this time of great grief and loss.

We believe that membership of the Commonwealth, which itself has changed, now offers Saint Lucia new opportunities.

Over the last few years, the Commonwealth has had to come to terms with the changing landscape of the global community and has now entered into a new paradigm, especially with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Saint Lucia intends to take advantage of the Commonwealth's diverse membership which offer valuable insights as we try to meet our development objectives.

The advent of Brexit also presents new possibilities for us as small islands and now with your Royal Highness' appointment to the helm of the Commonwealth we look forward to a new invigorated and strengthened Commonwealth where we can create new alliances.

In our own ongoing assessments of the first 40 years of our Independence, we have concluded that as a small country with limited resources, we have achieved so much.

But we cannot survive on our own. Participation in the OECS, CARICOM and the Commonwealth, is testimony to the adage that there is strength in numbers.

We have to recognize how effective we can be, together.

In this world of globalization and dwindling sources of development assistance, there is no doubt that we will be constantly challenged in the years ahead to meet the dreams and aspirations of our people.

In our coming of age, however, we are also committed to using our small size to our advantage and take control of our destiny.

The challenges that we face are many: crime, unemployment and improved social services. Among, the greatest challenges that we face is the issue of climate change. And we're not in this alone. Climate Change does not discriminate. Whether you are big or small, rich or poor - **It affects us all.**

As a Small Island Developing State, we are often paralyzed, because when it comes to building resilience, we are not in control of our own destiny. We are constrained by global bureaucracies.

This was most glaring with the rampage that hurricanes brought to our region just two years ago.

Despite this, we continue to approach the task with determination, but for us to be successful we require intervention.

Your Royal Highness, we trust that your short stay with us on this occasion will provide the perfect start for your visit throughout the Caribbean.

We wish you a successful tour, one that we are certain will hold fond memories long after you have departed our shores.

On behalf of the Government and People of Saint Lucia, and in particular our youth, please convey to Her Majesty and Prince Philip, as well as other members of the Royal family, our continued love, highest regard and best wishes for their happiness and long life.

May God Bless You, May God Bless the Queen and May God continue to Bless Saint Lucia.