

Address by Hon. Ezechiel Joseph
Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, Physical
Development, Natural Resources and Cooperatives
World Water Day 2019

On Friday March 22nd 2019, World Water Day will be celebrated. This will be the 26th annual event since it was officially launched back in 1993.

Although water plays an important role in our daily lives, the celebration is one to cause us to reflect and recognize the many water issues that affect us locally and also on a global scale.

It is also a day for us to realize the important role we can play to help protect and preserve our water resources.

Each year, there is a specific theme. This year's theme is ("**Leaving no one behind**").

This is in the context that billions of people do not have access to safe water for households, schools, farms, factories etc. The situation is most acute for groups such as women, children, refugees and indigenous people.

The United Nations Assembly has recognized the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realisation of all human rights.

In Saint Lucia, significant strides have been made to supply potable water to the population. This action has been implemented through augmenting water availability and implementing measures to protect water quality.

Nonetheless, challenges remain, and we are working diligently to ameliorate the situation.

Within my Ministry, the *Water Resources Management Agency (WRMA)*, the *Forestry Department and Water Sewerage Company INC (WASCO)* continue to work towards further protecting and preserving our water resources.

The need to quantify and evaluate the vulnerability of our water resources has become increasingly important particularly when taking *Climate Change* into account.

The threats posed, such as the shifts in rainfall patterns, the increased intensity of storm events, and limitations in sources of fresh water, make our country highly vulnerable.

The unavailability of freshwater is a limiting factor for economic and social development in an island state like ours.

Despite this and moving forward, we are incorporating climate change adaptive measures to ensure that ***no one is left behind***. In that regard, we have seen the implementation of some major projects such as:

- The John Compton Dam Rehabilitation,
- The Dennery North Water Supply Redevelopment; and
- The Vieux Fort Water Supply Redevelopment Projects
- Water improvement projects in many communities for example:

Babonneau
Micoud South
Bouton
Delcer and
Anse La Raye

The implementation of these projects are in-keeping with our strategy towards ensuring that an ever increasing percentage of our population will enjoy access to a safe and consistent water supply. It is important that we all play our part by appreciating the value of water, practicing water conservation measures and protecting the environment.

In closing I would like to express my appreciation to the many organizations who have assisted in achieving the theme.

Do have a productive World Water Day and thank you for listening.

