



Her Excellency Dame Dr. Calliopa Pearlette Louisy

On the Occasion of the Opening of the Fifth Session of the Eighth Parliament

of Saint Lucia

THRONE SPEECH

April 19, 2005

Mr. President and Members of the Senate. Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly,

We are at that juncture, once again, in the parliamentary life of this country, which marks both the passage and the return of time. One year later, and almost to the day, we are where we were last year, assessing the past and preparing for the future. In so doing, we are all expectant that with the passage of time in the interval which has transpired, we have made worthy progress towards our goals as a nation and our aspirations as a people.

In that regard, it is both our function and our custom to use this opportunity to focus public attention on those issues to which we feel the country must address its energies in a collective fashion if it is to move forward in unison. It is those issues that we must tackle with a clear sense of commitment to country and a determination to succeed. Our society, if it is to endure, must facilitate the best possible combination of individual ambition and collective responsibility. We must be concerned as much with economic growth as with the social development which underpins and renders sustainable the material advancement of our society.

Mr President, Mr Speaker, there are many such issues which bind us as a nation. There are many issues which remind us that we should be first and foremost, fellow Saint Lucians, standing shoulder to shoulder, fighting the forces that conspire against our mutual interests and our common good. These forces include disease, poverty, ignorance, injustice, and opportunity denied. They are the real enemies, and we are not alone among the nations of the world in our attempt to defeat and eradicate them.

THE PHENOMENON OF CRIME

If there is one manifestation which combines these evils, it is the phenomenon of crime. We are all familiar with its tentacles. There is not one of us who has not been touched, either directly or indirectly. We are all affected, whether suddenly by violence, or gradually as we are robbed of our quality of life, our sense of security or our liberties that we once took for granted.

These are not matters which afflict just the unfortunate few. These erosions are losses for us all: both the current generation and the next. But surely, we are not helpless against these forces. We have not lost the will to unite as communities; to demonstrate our intolerance, our determination, our absolute refusal to be defeated by the criminal elements which would rob us of our liberty, dignity and way of life. We must not be afraid and give in to the criminals.

It is time for our country to be united against these elements, and to turn our energies from complaint to cooperation. We cannot hoard vital information and expect resolution.

We cannot turn the blind eye and expect to see the light. We cannot smile quietly at each other's misfortune and not expect the same to be visited upon ourselves. We cannot rejoice at the limited effectiveness of the forces of law and order and not expect ourselves to fall victim. We cannot stay silent in the night and then make a mighty noise when the sun rises.

As law abiding citizens, we are all custodians of our country, we are all responsible for the preservation of our cherished way of life. While it might be true that conditions are worse in some neighbouring countries, we can take no comfort in that fact. We who live here, we who would raise our children here, we who would profess our love of God and country, cannot be the same ones who refuse to be counted in the war against crime.

Moreover, Mr President, Mr Speaker, there are complex social, economic, and demographic issues lurking beneath the surface. These require long term structural change before their ultimate resolution. It is for example, a telling fact that the typical criminal profile in Saint Lucia is as follows: male, unemployed, aged 16 to 25, and the product of a dysfunctional family. This is symptomatic of larger societal problems, which must be addressed with some consistency by the society. Failing that, they will address themselves to the whole society. We all must play our part in the fight against crime. That is the only way we can win this battle.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker, jòdi-a ka bay pwèskè yon lanné dépi nou té ouvè dènyé sèsyon Paleman péyi-a. E kom lakoutim nou té sèvi lokasyon sala pou wéfléchi asou pwogwé-a nou té fè diwan lanné 2003-a, épi pou déterminé diwèksyon nou té vlé péyi-a pwan an lanné 2004-la. Konstitusyon péyi-a ka fè pwovizyon pou nou witouné, chak lanné, an Kay Konsit péyi-a, pou fè kalité wéflèksyon sala, pou winouvèlè lèspwi konminoté nou, kon yon pèp, yon nasyon, pou ègzaminé sé plan-an Gouvèdman ka pwoposé-a pou avansé dévlopman péyi-a, swé ékonomik ében sosyal, épi pou koumansé wéfléchi asou kontwibusyon nou chak kay bay-la pou asiwé siksé sé plan-an.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker, la ni anchay dibyen ki ka fèt an péyi-a, anchay dévlopman ki ka pwan kou an tout vil épi tikot péyi-a. Mé si i ni yon bagay ki an danjé détwi tout sa , épi anpéché nou jwi bénéfis tout twavay-la épi tout bonnvolonté majowité jan péyi-a, sé zafè kwim-lan. Hosman kwim-lan ka afèkté nou tout, diwèkman ében endiwèkman, swé sibatman pa violans, ében piti a piti, kon sé kwanimèl-la ka vòlè jou an jou bon kalité lavi-a épi libèté-a nou té konnèt-la.

Sé pa sèlman sé viktim kwim-lan ki ka touvé afèkté. Nou tout an pèdant. Silon pawòl ayèl nou, lè nou wè bab kamawad nou pwi difé, sé pa pou nou wigolé, ében di "ka'y mété'y, ka'y touvé'y"; sé pou nou pwan pokosyon épi wouzé sa nou. Nou tout ni wèspansabilité-a pou fè sa nou pé, sa nou sa, pou wabat lépidenmi sala ki ka détwi péyi nou an. Nou pa sa blamé lézòt épi an menm tan-an wifisé édé sé sa ki ka twavay-la; nou pa sa fè kon si nou avèg, épi èspéwé wè klèté. Sa ki ni solisyon, vini douvan. Pa tjenn yo pou denmen. Denmen pitèt kay twò ta. Sent Lisi sé péyi-nou,

sé isi nou ka wété, sé isi nou ka lévé ich-nou. Nou pa sa kité yonn/dé malfète dévalisé péyi-a konsa, wann nou tout viktim konsa. Alò annou mété lanmen ansanm , san pyès wikwiminasyon, pou sové péyi-nou.

CARICOM HEADS OF GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE

It is gratifying to note, Mr President, Mr Speaker, that despite our challenges, our country continues to enjoy the confidence and esteem of our sister nations in the region. Indicative of this esteem is the fact that Saint Lucia will host the next Caricom Heads of Government Conference, due to take place from July 03 to July 07, 2005. The Honourable Prime Minister who assumes chairmanship of Caricom will host and chair this conference.

As we are well aware, among our finest achievements in the Caribbean are those things that we have accomplished together, in such areas as sport, education, art, academics, trade and governance. Moreover, it is clear that the People of the Caribbean hold among their most cherished ambitions, the ideal of a single Caribbean citizenry. For this reason we are particularly encouraged by the decision to emboss the passport of every Member State with a confirmation that the bearer is a citizen of the Caribbean Community. This we feel, will be a major milestone on the long road to eventual Caribbean citizenship.

Similarly, if the evolution of the regional movement is to be measured by the institutions to which it gives birth, then the establishment of the Caribbean Court of Justice confirms the strength and maturity of a movement achieving full measure. It is an indication of a region coming of age. It is a signal of a people taking ultimate responsibility. It is a consequential and inevitable part of the evolving system of governance and modernisation which must accompany any forward progress of the regional integration initiative.

RISE IN FUEL PRICES

Mr President, Mr Speaker, while it is true that our development must first be driven by our own national priorities, it is also true that our development takes place in the context of certain larger externalities. It is therefore true that some aspects of the circumstances within which we aspire to build, to grow, and to prosper are in fact beyond our control. One such example is the current impact of oil prices upon our cost of production.

Most industries, indeed most countries linked into the global economy, are grappling with the effects of high oil prices. In our energy dependent world, the price of oil affects the production of almost every traded good and service. Thirty years ago, the price of oil increased from US\$3.00 a barrel to US\$11.00 per barrel , and this was described as a “crisis”. Today it is five times that amount, around US\$50 to US\$58 per barrel. How then must we describe the current situation ?

This sort of price volatility affects the prospects of all developing countries. It undermines economic security and signals our vulnerabilities in the face of larger political and economic agendas. It is particularly difficult for those countries which continue to export low-margin primary agricultural products in order to pay for high-priced oil imports.

It is true that in meeting its fuel import bills, a diversified Saint Lucian economy is better positioned than many. What continues to be of concern however, is the attendant price volatility which makes it difficult to predict the market prices of energy-based products and services. This is of particular relevance to the travel and accommodation sectors of the Tourism industry.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

What must also be obvious is that we must now import and consume energy in more efficient and responsible ways. As an energy dependent economy, we must be conscious of both cost and consumption. As such, my Government intends to establish an Energy Conservation Task Force to advise both Government and consumers on energy utilisation and conservation.

Consistent with this need to reduce Saint Lucia 's dependence on fossil fuels and increase the use of renewable energy, it is heartening to note that my Government has facilitated the acquisition of lands for use by LUCELEC for the early development of a wind farm. This initiative gives substance to our interest in alternate energy solutions. If it proves fruitful, there is every possibility that a significant proportion of Saint Lucia 's energy needs could be met from renewable energy resources.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker, sé fo nou apwésyé ki, menm si nou pwan tout kalité démach pou avansé kò nou ében dévlopman péyi-nou, tanzantan la kay ni bagay nou pa kay sa kontwolé. Yonn adan sé bagay-la ki ka afèkté nou sèwézman-an sé jou sala, sé pwi pétrol asou laplas entènasyonal-la. E sé fo nou sav ki pwi pétrol sala ka afèkté pwi tout machandiz épi tout sèvis oliwon latè-a. Twant lanné ki pasé, yon bawi pétrol té ka kouté twa dòla améwitjen; jodi- a I ka kouté senkant-wit dòla – pwèskè diswit fwa pli chè. E sé pou kalité pwi sala nou ni pou achté pétrol-la nou ni biswen-an pou fè biznis Sent Lisi, an menm tan pwi podwi agrikòl nou-an ka bésé jou an jou asou menm laplas entènasyonal-la. Sé sitwasyon sala nou tout ni pou konpwann lè lézotowité kay kwiyé asou nou tout pou amennajé mannyè nou ka sèvi lénèji. Sé sitwasyon sala nou kay ni pou konpwann lè nou wè pwi machandiz épi pwi sèvis ka hosé, épi lè akwèdi lajan nou ka étwési jou an jou. Sé la nou kay koumansé konpwann poutji nou oblijé divèsifyé lékonomi péyi-a, pou nou sa balansé pwi épi valè sa nou ka vann épi sa nou ka achté an gwan laplas entènasyonal-la.

THE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr President, Mr Speaker, in the building of any rational society, it is imperative that a foundation be laid for good governance. That foundation must be based on a system of fair, just and relevant legislation. It is the existence and application of laws that preserve societies from anarchy.

Over the last eight years, this imperative has occasioned an ambitious and unprecedented agenda of legislative reform and modernisation. That process continues with several pieces of new legislation being brought to this house in the coming months.

LICENSING AND REGULATION OF OFFSHORE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, one of the most ignored developments in our country is the existence of Offshore Medical Universities. Indeed, since 1980, the Spartan Health Sciences University has been operating in Saint Lucia. This University has its own campus and teaching facilities, and provides tuition to approximately 80 students from all over the world. Currently, there are five (5) such institutions in existence in Saint Lucia, but only two are fully operational – Spartan Health Sciences University and the International American University. Both of these institutions are resident in Vieux Fort.

Unquestionably Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, these institutions contribute significantly to the communities where they are located. All, however, operate in an unregulated and unstructured environment. This situation has evoked considerable external concern, particularly in the United States.

In this legislative year, my Government proposes to remedy this situation by introducing a Universities and Colleges (Licensing and Control) Bill to Honourable Members for their review and enactment. The Bill will inter alia make provision for the issuance of licenses, the conditions of such licences, and the assessment and review of the academic programmes of these institutions.

DRUG TREATMENT COURT

Legislation regarding the establishment of a Drug Treatment Court will soon be introduced as a means of providing alternatives to custodial sentences for drug addicts. This model has been effective in developing countries in so far as it provides for the options of treatment, rehabilitation and useful re-entry into society. We are pleased to note that the Government of Canada has committed to assist with the implementation of this initiative.

MONEY LAUNDERING PREVENTION

Saint Lucia has already achieved a high level of compliance with the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force, with respect to Money Laundering and Proceeds of Crime. Nevertheless, my Government is proceeding to update the laws to deal with the

remaining challenges. Accordingly, new legislation will be introduced during this session to consolidate and update relevant Money Laundering and Proceeds of Crime Legislation. This updated legislation will cover smuggling, as well as declaration and disclosure requirements in respect of inbound and outbound movements of cash and other bearer instruments. The legislation will empower authorities to monitor, manage and share information with third country authorities regarding the source, destination and use of funds.

CIVIL FORFEITURE BILL

A Civil Forfeiture Bill will be introduced in Parliament during this session to establish processes by which ill-gotten property will be permanently forfeited where such property is determined to have been acquired with proceeds derived from criminal activity, particularly activity related to drug trafficking, money laundering and terrorism.

CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (MOVEMENT OF FACTORS) BILL

In order to give effect and substance to certain provisions of the Revised Treaty of Chagaramus, and the establishment of the Single Market and Economy, legislation will be introduced to allow nationals of the Caribbean Community to exercise the right of establishment, the right to provide services and the right to move capital into or out of Saint Lucia, particularly where such transfers originate or terminate in other member states of the Community. This will require amendments to several related pieces of legislation governing movement of skilled nationals, alien's landholding licenses and trade licences, company ownership and structure, and micro and small businesses.

REVISION OF CUSTOMS LAWS

A review of Customs Laws has been undertaken in anticipation of the need to modernise and automate the Customs department. This is particularly relevant for the continued deployment of the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA). On the basis of this review, my Government will, during 2005, introduce amendments to existing legislation to allow for innovation in areas such as the use of a taxpayer identification system, the new Caricom Single Administrative Documentation System, new Customs Procedure codes, electronic declaration, electronic signature, and data mining and management by Customs.

RECOGNITION OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

In the course of this Fifth Session of the Eighth Parliament, my Government also intends to introduce a Bill to recognise Non-Governmental Organisations, confer them with legal status, and create an environment that allows them to operate and thrive. In that regard, my Government intends to make use of the CARICOM Model Draft Bill, which has received the blessing of Non-Governmental Organisations throughout the region.

UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

My Government will take the first legislative step towards establishing an appropriate legislative environment for the introduction of the Universal Health Care System now described as the UHC. Among the provisions to be implemented is a change in the governance system for Victoria Hospital, Golden Hope and Turning Point. It is envisaged that these agencies will be governed by a single Board of Directors, who will have authority over, and responsibility for, the proper and efficient management of these institutions and their respective resources. Government will divest itself of the responsibility to manage these hospitals on a day to day basis.

We are particularly pleased to note that this formula, which is already effective at St. Jude's Hospital, is the mutually acceptable result of wide consultations with health practitioners, health workers, interest groups and stake holders, across the sector. My Government will ensure that the new arrangements do not affect the existing rights and related privileges of current employees. This Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, is a good opportunity to restate the importance and the objectives of the UHC.

The proposed UHC is much more than raising finance to fund health services. The UHC is a strategy that introduces quality control and appropriate cost containment in the health sector. The UHC makes possible adequate financing for a defined set of health services, such that health institutions can continue to operate in an environment of continuous improvement. The UHC supports preventative and community services by virtue of the system of provider payment that ensures financial incentives for hospitals to work closely with community services to keep persons well in the community. The UHC is a social solidarity system in which we all contribute to ensure that all have access to necessary services regardless of the ability to pay. This way, we all become our brothers and sisters' keeper.

The UHC is non-discriminatory and is open to public and private providers without subsidy or artificial protection to either set of providers. The UHC creates an open, but regulated health market place, in which the residents of Saint Lucia are the main beneficiaries. The introduction of UHC covers the expensive areas of institutional care, overseas care and pharmaceuticals. It allows my Government to focus, through appropriate existing performance-based programme budgeting, on the development of national health programmes, designed to promote well-being, prevent disease and keep residents healthy and productive.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, the UHC deserves the support of all of us.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker, fondasyon nenpòt sosyété sé sé lwa-a ki an plas-la pou gouvènè jan péyi-a épi pou wéglé mannyè yo ka konpòté kò yo épi yonnalòt. Chak lanné nou ka anonsé an Kay Konsit isi-a menm, sé lwa-a Gouvèdman ka pwopozé entwodwi, chanjé, ében wanfòsé-a. Lanné sala, nou ka pwopozé, pami lézot:

- ❖ An lwa ki kay établi démach pou Gouvèdman sézi popyété moun, si lalwa touvé pwèw ki lajan-an ki achté popyété sala sé lajan dwòg, lajan lablannisaj (an anglé “money laundering”), aktivité tèroris, ében dôt aktivité kwiminèl ;
- ❖ Lwa ki kay fasilite biznis pami sé péyi Caricom-lan; pou édé Sent Lisyen fè biznis an sé lézòt péyi CSME-an; épi natiwèlman pou édé jan sé péyi sala fè biznis Sent Lisi;
- ❖ Lwa ki kay édé Ladwenn mòdènizé mannyè yo ka fè biznis épi moun ki ka mennen machandiz antwé an péyi-a ;
- ❖ Pwèmyé sé sèt lwa-a ki kay fasilite lentwodiksyon Sistènm Santé nèf-la – sa nou ka kwiyé Universal Health Care System :UHC-a. Adan sé chanjman-an ki kay pwan kou-a sé an chanjman an ladministrasyon lopital Victoria , lopital Golden Hope épi Turning Point. Silon plan-an, Gouvèdman pa kay ni wèsponsabilité ankò pou mennajé sé twa institusyon sala, mé i kay apwenté yon Konsèy Administratif – an anglé an “Board of Directors” – pou diwijé zafè sé lopital-la. Bagay ja ka maché konsa an lopital St. Jude, épi tout sé moun-lan ki té patisipé an sé konsiltasyon-an aksèpté modèl sala.

Kon Gouvèdman té anonsé lanné pasé, anba sistènm UHC-a nou tout kay fè kontwibusyon nou, épi nou tout kay jwi bénéfis kontwibusyon yonnalòt, sitou pou wisivyé médikanman, ében pou lè nou ni pou alé lopital, swé isi ében lòt péyi. An sé mwa ki ka vini-an nou kay explitjé an pli détay mannyè sistènm-la kay maché.

RATIONALISATION OF SETTLEMENTS

Mr President, Mr. Speaker it is well known that there is tremendous overcrowding in the Castries basin and surrounding urban areas. This is the unfortunate result of years of spontaneous and unplanned expansion of residential communities. It is also the result of urban drift and indiscriminate squatting. In many cases, this has led to intolerable social conditions and dangerous physical conditions: unauthorised construction, poor drainage, land slippage and worse.

It is now vital that there be a systematic rationalisation of such settlements to bring relief to residents and improve prospects for poverty reduction and wealth creation through the acquisition of land ownership and title.

Accordingly, my Government will, during this year, commence a resettlement program in Conway. Thereafter, similar processes will be undertaken in other communities based on economic and social analysis of existing conditions and determination of resident profiles. These tasks will be undertaken by the Ministry of Physical Development, Environment and Housing. Given the extent of the problems to be tackled, these processes are likely to be complex and lengthy and will require patience on all sides.

SUPPORT FOR ENUMERATION EXERCISE

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker in the course of this financial year, my Government will finance the cost of compiling a new and updated Electoral List, the first since

independence in 1979. As mandated by the Constitution, the enumeration exercise will be conducted under the direction and aegis of the Electoral Commission. There are compelling reasons why a new Electoral List is necessary and vital to our democracy.

Over the years, there has been significant internal migration of voters. Many individuals vote in constituencies in which they do not reside. The existing Electoral List does not always bear relation to the demography of constituencies. Moreover, the existing list needs to be purged of the names of voters who have died or who no longer enjoy any real connection to Saint Lucia .

There is evidence also to suggest that existing technology allows criminals to fabricate identification cards to confer rights and privileges on individuals who do not qualify to be citizens.

A new National Identification Card will be issued to each registered voter, the key element of which will be a unique number. The technology used on the card will enable it to be swiped through a reader to allow access to data and services. The unique number will be used as an administrative mechanism for a variety of purposes, first and foremost as a general reference to link the cardholders' activities in many areas of Public Administration. This card will also facilitate travel to those O.E.C.S. Member States who accept National Identification Cards in place of passports.

This exercise will test the collective patience of all. However, it is necessary in order to allow governance, administration and the democratic processes to become more secure and efficient. My Government, therefore, urges all citizens to co-operate fully with the Electoral Commission.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker, nou tout sav ki tout oliwon péyi-a, la ni anchay kay ki bati tou kwispé, kwispé, tou chòk an blòk, yonn anlè lòt. Byen délé tè-a pa menm sa yo, épi menm pa sa sé moun-lan ki vann li bay yo-a. Nou ja wè kalité problem-lan sa ka annékòs: pa ègzanp, lanfalay tè, kay ki anfondway, go dézòd èk chikan pami vwazen. Gouvèdman kay kontiné wéglé sitwasyon sala, pou édé sé moun-lan achté tè épi pou bay yo papyé tè yo. Lanné sala program-la kay koumansé an Conway. Sé pa an bagay ki kay ésé ; Nou kay ni pou déplasé moun. Mé nou ka mandé tout moun ki kay touvé afèkté pasyans épi lakonpwann.

Lanné sala osi, Gouvèdman kay mandé Konmité Elèktoral-la pou nétwayé lis elèktoral péyi-a, paski sa yo ni atjwèlman-an ni 26 lanné dépi i fèt. Ou sa byen konpwann ki lis-la ni non moun ki ja mò, sa ki ja émigwé lòt péyi pandan lanné. I ni moun ki ja chanjé wézidans yo ,, mé non yo anwéjistwé toujou an constituency-a koté yo té ka wété avan-an. Konmité-a kay pwan lokasyon sala pou bay tout moun ki anwéjistwé Kat Idantité Nasyonal (ID Kad) nèf. Ou kay sa sèvi Kat nèf-la pou anchay lot sèvis. Pa ègzanp, ou kay sa sèvi'y pou voyajé an sé lézòt péyi OECS-la ki ka aksèpté Kat Idantité Nasyonal an plas paspò. Pou lègzésis sala nou ka mandé tout moun ankò pou lakonpwann épi pasyans.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker, nou sé jan Kawaib-la ni pou kontiné fè pwogwé épi dévlope kò nou. Sé pou nou ni konfyans an kò nou. Sé pa paski nou sòti an lèsklavaj, nou pli malfouti ki lézòt. Okontwè, magwé listwa kolonialis épi èsklavajis nou, nou éwisi bati an sosyété épi an kilti kawaibéen ki vivan, ki ka bwiyé; an kilti ki pa fawouch. I ni anchay bagay nou sa moutwé lézòt. E se sa nou kay fè an 2007 pou ICC Cricket World Cup-la. Nou kay moutwé lèstan latè-a ki pititès pa ni maladi, ni péché, ni wézon pou wann kò nou koutja. An 2007 sé péyi Kawaib-la kay ni an lòt wézon pou hosé né yo. Epi Sent Lisi pa kay manchòt nonpli. Konsa annou mété tèt nou ansanm, annou mété lanmen ansanm adan yon gwan koudmen nasyonal pou fè twavay-la nou ni pou fè-a. Nou ja ni on bon fondasyon solid. Avèk lafòs, kouway épi kopéwasyon, nou kay éwisi.

CONCLUSION

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, as Caribbean people, we must continue to progress and prosper, drawing on the wellspring of our shared identity and our sense of purpose in the world. We must believe that, by our example, the example of a people who have built sustainable societies out of the rubble of slavery, sugar and colonialism, that we have something awesome to teach the world. In 2007, with the hosting of the ICC Cricket World Cup, we will have the occasion to demonstrate emphatically that our region is able to overcome the constraints of size with commitment, resolve, pride and commonality of purpose. All we require is a fair opportunity to excel and to compete and we will do the rest.

So if it is to be from different ends of the political spectrum, if it is by pulling together instead of apart, if it is by conquering the socio-economic divide, or by crossing over to compromise and understanding, let us not lose sight of our own fine example and that of those who have gone before. Although much has been accomplished, there is still much to be done and we will need the strength, fortitude and cooperation of all Saint Lucians as we take our country forward into the future.

And so, Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to declare open the Fifth Session of the Eighth Parliament of Saint Lucia.