

Be proud of our achievements

**Address on the Occasion of the 35th Anniversary of Independence of Saint
Vincent and the Grenadines on**

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Governor-General of St. Vincent and the Grenadines

**To Mark the 35th Anniversary of Independence of St. Vincent and the
Grenadines, 27 October 2014**

My fellow Vincentians, it is again an honour and a privilege to address you on this the 35th anniversary of our country's Independence.

We celebrate this anniversary at a time when the life of every citizen has been negatively impacted by the very difficult economic climate facing the entire world.

The expected turn around following the economic crisis of 2008, has been painfully slow, and the projection for the next two years is that most countries are likely to show insignificant growth, if any at all. This economic environment makes it very difficult for small states such as ours to survive and prosper.

I wish to highlight here some of the problems which have confronted us over the past few years.

1. The high cost of oil which since independence has tripled.
2. Our banana export, which was the backbone of our economy, has plummeted to almost zero.
3. Tourism, which we had looked to replace income from bananas, has been very weak, influenced heavily by the world's poor economic performance.
4. The epidemic of Chikungunya, which is now ravishing our shores along with the looming threat of Ebola, would further impact negatively on world travel and tourism.

5. Added to the above, we have witnessed severe storms and floods, causing millions of dollars in damage.

We need to be cognizant of the fact that all these adverse events are not of our making and over which we have no control. The cumulative effect, however, means that our small economy is in a stranglehold, with increasing pressure being exerted on our standard of living and the quality of life of all our citizens.

Many businesses are on the brink of bankruptcy, and many persons are without work, and find it difficult to meet their basic needs.

The question then, which all of us must ask, is "Where do we go from here?" The fundamental problem facing us is how can we overcome these negative forces. We all have different solutions to the problems facing us, and since we are stronger collectively rather than individually, I again make an appeal for all of us to join forces to forge solutions for the benefit of all.

I wish particularly to beg for more tolerance, especially to those who have opposing views and who under economic stress are "edgy" and easily resort to violence.

I ask that we make an extra effort to be more respectful to each other. If you truly respect yourself, it would be easy to respect others and forgive them some of their short comings.

I will not reiterate here the need to respect the environment, to help prevent a repeat of the disastrous floods, the beach erosion and the proliferation of mosquitoes.

We need more than ever to be kind and generous, especially to the poor and unemployed.

As a country we are too poor to waste any of our resources; each of us needs to commit ourselves to stamp out wastefulness in our daily lives.

In spite of the various challenges, we can still be proud of our significant achievements in the fields of health, education and poverty alleviation. We cannot allow any erosion of the gains made over the 35 years in these fields.

Above all, we need to work harder, not only to preserve our own job, but to improve the productivity of the country, while efforts need to be made to try to create employment for the many, many able-bodied men, women, boys and girls who are unemployed.

Like you, my fellow Vincentians, I love this country and all of its people. I have faith that if we work together, we will find a way to make the future better for all of us.

More than ever, we need the strong to help the weak, and the rich to help the poor. Let us in our daily lives strive to lift each other up, not only physically, but in spirit, and with God's blessings we will not only survive but prosper.

My family and I wish you a happy, incident free Independence.