

# **Independence Message 2012**

**By His Excellency Eliud Williams, DAH**

**President of the Commonwealth of Dominica**

**3 November 2012**

As we celebrate the 34<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Independence, I am pleased to extend very warm congratulations to all Dominicans on this very special occasion. I recall very clearly that evening in early November, 1978 when the Union Jack was lowered and the Dominican Flag was hoisted. This action signaled a new beginning with renewed hope for a brighter future. Today, I believe we can be justifiably proud of the progress that we have made over those thirty four years.

In just over three decades, we have greatly improved our social and physical infrastructure. We have built roads and bridges, electrified the entire country; built businesses and industries, built schools and colleges, communities and churches as well as health centers and a primary health care system which is a model to the developing world. Our scholars and artistes have achieved international recognition in various fields of endeavor which is a tribute to our resolve and intellectual capacity.

When I look at all that we have achieved, I am comforted that none of these developments could have occurred without the guidance of our Heavenly Father and the active support and engagement of our people. It is precisely because of these joint efforts and the engagement of all stakeholders that I believe that this year's theme "Partnering for Further Progress and Development" is so appropriate. Economic and social development by their very nature requires the active collaboration and commitment of many partners.

The theme recognizes that as we advance in the process of nation building, there are challenges and opportunities which must be addressed by our policy makers, employers, labour unions, business leaders and other social partners. This year's Independence Anniversary theme therefore offers a unique opportunity to re-define our path to further progress and development. It is an opportunity afforded us to set new goals and priorities given the economic and social challenges in our region and elsewhere. We must continue to explore new areas of economic activity and the many opportunities offered by the emerging industries.

In this regard, it is an appropriate time to commend our Division of Culture, its past and present leadership, for the vision and foresight they have shown over the last three decades in developing our Independence celebrations so that we have now developed a uniquely Dominican product and great sense of national pride. Now, we are truly proud in displaying our national colours at home and abroad. Our Arts and Culture must therefore transcend the social festivities and also focus on the economic dimension.

The available evidence suggests that the service industries hold the best potential for economic advancement. These service industries can be used to leverage the intellectual and creative talents of our people even while recognizing the need for a continuous pool of knowledge workers as one of its main pillars for success. In this regard, I applaud the emphasis being placed by the public and private sectors on the holistic approach to education from early childhood to the tertiary level.

One notable technological development in the last decade is the wide spread availability of broadband which is an excellent example of partnering for further progress and development. As we continue along the path of development, we must appreciate that the road ahead demands that we remain resolute in preserving our democratic values and traditions and also recognize that there are still many challenges to further develop and improve on all that we have achieved.

I therefore renew the call to preserve everything that makes us uniquely Dominican. It is a call to cherish the essential values of hard work, integrity, honesty and merit while we continue to uphold the rule of law, justice and equality as critical pillars of our nation State. We must therefore remain focused on the constant need for dialogue and engagement of public and private sector. This dialogue and engagement that must also include civil society, conscious that investments education, which is Caribbean focused with a global perspective, offer the greatest hope in building the capacity of our people to produce high quality goods and excellent service for effective participation in a competitive global economy.

Let me once again extend congratulations to the entire citizenry on this our 34<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence. May God bless you and continue to bestow His blessings on our beautiful country.