

We are Nature Island People

2018 Independence Message on the occasion of Dominica's 38th Anniversary of Independence

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My Nature Island Brothers and Sisters:

While the world's population has grown by more than 3 billion people in the last 4 decades, we celebrate our 40th Anniversary as an independent nation more dependent and with a smaller population than when we stepped out on our own in 1978.

The reasons why so many of our sons and daughters have been forced by governance failures and economic necessity to leave the land of their birth were painfully underlined in the departure of Ross University School of Medicine – a mature, high performance, 40-year-old investment – in the year of our 40th anniversary of independence. We have lost our way:

- We stand powerless as galloping unemployment, grinding poverty, disappearance of the middle class, rising crime and degradation of social services slaps us in the face each and every day
- We are the smallest and weakest economy in the independent states of the English-speaking Caribbean
- We are the 3rd most cancerous nation in the world
- We have a spiraling Non-Communicable Disease Epidemic
- We have lost over half of our agricultural output in the last fifteen years
- We are burdened with biggest brain drain per capita in the Caribbean
- We deposit a lot of money in the banks but cannot convince the banks to lend enough money from those deposits for productive purposes

- Government cannot facilitate the private sector as the main engine of economic growth. It could not enhance the climate for doing business and creating jobs
- Government cannot diversify from traditional agriculture into non-traditional crops, promotion of exports, and increase in value added
- Government cannot enhance the tourism product and increase its income earning capacity
- Government cannot facilitate a reduction of energy costs so as to achieve a reduction of electricity tariffs and thereby secure an increase in the competitiveness and viability of businesses operations.
- We do not have an international airport

The decisions we have taken, the policies we have pursued especially in the last 18 years have locked us into an inefficient and fossil fuel dependent infrastructure and unattractive, unhealthy, unsustainable lifestyles. We are not who we are! And in the words of an insightful Dominican teenager "we need to become who we are"

The first priority of the next 40 years is national recognition and acceptance of the simple truth that we are citizens of a country born to shine as the Nature Island of the World – the isle of beauty, the isle of splendor... with rivers, valleys hills and mountains... with healthy lands, pastures green and flowers of beauty.

We are Nature Island people. We should rejoice as united people in the unity of diversity that defines nature. We should thrive as free people on equality and justice according to the rules of divine order. We should sustain ourselves in peaceful co-existence living in harmony with nature. That is who we are. A nature island people – God fearing, strong, healthy and as resilient as the natural environment. That is where we are strong – Nature Island Strong!

At the 40th anniversary of independence milestone, let us leave behind the political, religious and other divisions we have created for ourselves, and discipline ourselves to become with the free, united, peaceful, harmonious, self-sustaining people that we truly are.

The national development efforts of government in the past 18 years have not worked because they have moved the narrative on economic advancement further and further away from the need for a national development philosophy that is in harmony with our true Nature Island character and identity.

This Nature Island Development Philosophy gives meaning and purpose to the agenda for change that will make Dominica the best place to live, the best place to work and the best place to enjoy life.

In accepting ourselves as Nature Island people, we accept that all human beings are considered divine and deserve to be treated equally. We accept that nothing in nature lives for itself and living for others is a rule of nature. We accept the responsibility to take care of ourselves as much as possible in the quest for lives of peace, freedom and human dignity. We accept the challenge of living in harmony with the natural environment...

Within the next ten years:

- We must create a success story of nature island citizen engagement and participation that brings government, people, businesses, civil society groups and neighborhoods in a collective effort to make Dominica the real, authentic, one and only Nature Island of the World
- We must establish a nature island context for education and health care and ground them in the scope and human development benefits of our natural resources
- We must infect the culture with the values, attitudes and behaviors that will allow our ecosystems, our biodiversity to support our sustainability
- We must set and achieve aggressive targets for water quality, food security, clean air, green businesses, green jobs, climate resilience, minimizing our carbon footprint, reducing consumption and eliminating waste
- We must complete the shift to renewable energy technologies
- We must connect the transportation sector to renewable energy through electric mobility
- We must place priority attention on environmentally friendly design and construction of buildings that will minimize environmental impact and allow nature to work for us instead of working against nature and thereby driving up energy consumption.

Let us truly appreciate the abundant blessings of Land, Water and Plants and their importance in feeding us, clothing us, sheltering us and funding our participation in global affairs and our integration with the family of mankind by helping others to meet these basic human needs in life supporting ways.

On the Nature Island our plants on the land provide food and drink as well as materials for clothing and shelter. The myriad shades of green, the flowers of beauty model resilience and decorate our lives. We breathe clean air; we drink clean water; we eat natural food. On the nature island our food and drink should be our medicine and our medicine should be our nature island food and drink. Our herbs should heal the nation. Our herbs should heal the world. Therefore, no plant or herb should be illegal in the nature island of the World.

The Nature Island Development philosophy offers the lovers of nature around the world a brand in the advancement of civilization that can identify with and support to succeed

especially in recognition of the fact that the true Nature Island of the world will automatically become, the first climate resilient country in the world. This will be nature's safe haven of peace and tranquility in a troubled world that most human beings on planet earth would want to visit.

It is a very serious offense against humanity for the isle of beauty, the isle of splendor; the nature island of the world; the nation with the most generous blessings of green per capita on God's earth to have so many of its precious children frustrated, sick, unemployed and condemned to hopeless dependency in lives of everlasting poverty.

In becoming who we are, we will ensure that our agriculture secures our health and wellness by making us self-sufficient in natural food and drink and providing plant-based solutions for our medical needs. By sharing these blessings with a world in need, we will grow our economy and generate wealth like we have never seen before.

This is our vision of hope for "My Love, My Home, My Dominica", the Nature Isle of Beauty "in which everyone rejoices All for each and each for all..."

Happy Independence 2018 with endless love and blessings in abundance.