

Independence Message 2007

By His Excellency Dr. Nicholas J.O. Liverpool, DAH

President of the Commonwealth of Dominica

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Twenty-nine years in the life of a nation is by no means a long time, but it is long enough for us to have learnt from our mistakes and to have realistically addressed the major obstacles to social peace and growth and development. This period has made clear the tremendous task that lies ahead as we seek to mobilise the creative energies of all the people who are willing to call this country home.

Independence presented us with the opportunity to frame our own destiny and to rely on ourselves to do so. Its celebration, therefore, is not a licence to do what we like, but rather it is a time to reflect work harder and to appreciate the rule of law and to show respect to the tenets of law and order.

We should be proud of the progress that we have made so far, and should thank God, that despite setbacks caused by natural disasters and economic distress, we have achieved much. But in order to continue on this path we must continue to think nationally and unselfishly, while working always towards the betterment of our country.

We need to show off to the world, and speak positively of our accomplishments, otherwise we might get bogged down in negative thoughts and actions, for it is only the appreciation of our achievements that will keep us inspired, and to remain committed to the continuing task of nation building.

We need to weave in the fabric of our lives sound social values and attitudes. Our quest to obtain the highest social standards must begin with ourselves and within our families. We must remember that whoever we are and whatever the circumstances we can make a difference, and aim to be masters of our own destiny.

It is not enough to identify and harp on the problems that we face. We must objectively assess and attempt to solve them. In doing so we may have to change our lifestyles, be more conservative in our mode of dress and spending habits, plan our savings more carefully and try

to ensure that there is the creation of capital. We must also seek goodness, mercy and truth and ask for God's guidance as we continue to build our country and celebrate our heritage.

As we review the past after twenty-nine years of independence we must also remember that much of the success we have achieved so far, has been due to the fact that those who went before us had the vision and cared enough, not only to dream but also to pursue and follow through the realisation of their dreams. They have indeed contributed in making our lives more comfortable, more prosperous and wholesome. Let us therefore work together so that future generations will say of us that we left them a legacy of creativity and productivity on which they can continue to build a strong and vibrant nation.

Our economy is beginning to improve. The threats to our progress by the impact of globalisation must be seen as an opportunity to become creative in making better use of the assets that we possess, as we competitively seek our position in the world marketplace especially in the field of tourism.

Our beautiful island offers one of the best tourist destinations therefore we need to concentrate on keeping our environment clean and attractive, our land green and our water pure.

The internet provides us with knowledge and the ability to excel, but it also means that in split seconds the sordid events of one part of the world reaches everywhere, and I continuously wonder whether this great resource is being used creatively to make living conditions better, or whether we are using it as opportunities for destruction.

Those are some of the challenges that we face, but we must not ignore our responsibility to be productive citizens who are driven by a desire to build a fair and just society. The scourge of AIDS and poverty continue. But we must demonstrate a collective response to these threats to our welfare with a view to their eradication.

Let us use the occasion of independence to chart a new beginning. We must be prepared to make sacrifices, supported by good vision and hard work. We must make a commitment, within ourselves, to make a difference in our little corner for the common good of all; and allow the rippling effect that this can have to permeate our society.

I take this opportunity, as we continue to build our country and celebrate its heritage, to invite all fellow citizens to continue our quest for peaceful progress, in our observance of democratic governance, for creative engagement on the solution of our problems, and for civilised living and spiritual wellness in a society fit for human habitation, buttressed by unity, peace and justice as its main pillars.