

Independence Message 2010

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

President of the Commonwealth of Dominica

3 November 2010

My Fellow Citizens,

It is always a pleasure and honour to address you on the occasion of the celebration of our Anniversary of Independence. It is most certainly a time of happiness and pride for all of us. We ought to be proud of our freedom, our democracy, our values and ideals. On this memorable occasion of our attainment of thirty-two years of nationhood, I extend greetings on behalf of my family and myself to all citizens of our country as we consider what this occasion means to us.

As we proudly celebrate this event, we need to do so with reverence and thanksgiving to God for the many blessings that He has bestowed upon our country and people, particularly for sparing us from natural disasters thus far during the Hurricane Season; but we must not forget the new challenges that we face today especially in the areas of crime and violence. Lawlessness, which continues to erode the social order and undermine the economic strides we seek to make, must be urgently addressed and eliminated.

We should also remember that our well being and progress have been built upon the foundation of the hard work and sacrifices of those who have gone before us. The best way of paying homage to them will be to resolve today that we will always stay committed to strengthening the unity and integrity of our nation. Let us all together take a vow that we will spare no effort to take Dominica to greater heights. We need to seize the moment now as each citizen pledges to participate in the healing, restoration and ultimate prosperity of our country.

This year's observance of independence is celebrated with the theme, "Creating Opportunities Empowering Communities." Dominica's progress can only be real when every citizen of our country benefits from it. I therefore exhort all of us to use our God given gifts, skills, talents, knowledge and experience to create those opportunities that will lead our country on the path of continued development; and also to take full advantage of the current opportunities which are provided in the areas of education, health, housing, information technology and entrepreneurship. I am delighted that central and local government's community planning

process comes under the heading of community empowerment where people work together to effect change in their communities by exercising more power and influence over what matters to them. Such an approach will build communities which have the characteristics of confidence, strong local leadership, and a high degree of resilience and resourcefulness - all of which are so crucial to confronting the many challenges that lie ahead.

Today's world is becoming smaller in many respects. Whether it is the international economic and financial crisis or terrorism or climate change – what happens in one part of the world has an effect on other parts. Terrorism has emerged as a threat to peace and security in all parts of the world. Climate change has become an issue of global concern in recent years.

We all must be concerned about the upsurge in violent crimes and murders in our beloved country. Now is not the time to make excuses and to play the blame game, but rather to take personal responsibility to change and work together to ensure that Dominica remains a land of peace and tranquility with a warm and hospitable people. Our citizens have the right to express dissent and anger but nothing is achieved by indulging in violence against one's fellow citizen. Our democracy has no place for those who resort to violence to express their disagreement.

As we take part in the several cultural activities available to us, let us also make time for sober reflection geared at dismantling the barriers of hate, envy, bitterness, greed, intolerance and political divisiveness. We must spend some time in prayer, in strengthening families; in being committed to sound values, productive living, the observance of the laws of our land, and respect for each other; in the objective search for integrity, equality and justice.

As a small vulnerable State we have come a long way and should be proud of the progress that we have made so far. We should also thank God that despite setbacks caused by natural disasters and the global economic and financial crisis, we have achieved much. Let us therefore appreciate our achievements and speak positively of our accomplishments instead of being engaged in negative thoughts and actions. Let us 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.

My Fellow Citizens we should not be daunted by the many challenges which lie ahead of us. Our pride and resilience has stood the test of time, and with God's continued mercy and grace, I am hopeful that as a people we can succeed.

We are blessed with many natural resources. Let us all join in the effort to appreciate and protect our rivers, our forests, and our physical and marine environment.

At this time of year we welcome home many of our Dominican brothers and sisters, and several visitors from our neighboring islands and other friendly countries. We should remember with

gratitude those who are assisting us in building our country. Let us recommit ourselves to the task of doing what we can in our homes and communities and acknowledge that within the challenges that shape our lives, lie the seeds of opportunity and renewal.

In the main our economic underdevelopment is self-inflicted. Although there have been external factors which have adversely affected us, and climatic conditions which have impacted on our country negatively, the greatest problem has been our disunity. We should, therefore, always put Dominica first as we aspire to build a more prosperous nation.

Finally, let us all be cognizant of the fact that we cannot do anything without Christ who strengthens us. Let us therefore humble ourselves, seek God's grace and turn from our ungodly ways to create a society that is truly pleasing to the Creator.

I wish everyone a restful and reflective independence day, as we continue to create opportunities for the empowerment of our people and communities.

May God bless us all and may God bless Dominica.