



**Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica**

**MESSAGE BY**

**HONOURABLE ROOSEVELT SKERRIT**

**PRIME MINISTER OF**

**THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA**

**On the occasion of the**

**39<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence**

**November 3, 2017**

Citizens and residents of our beloved Dominica,

In the Book of Ecclesiastes, we are reminded that there is a given time for everything and a time for every happening under heaven. The thinker who penned these words also wrote, that there was a time for knocking down, and a time for building.

We celebrate the thirty-ninth anniversary of our political independence in the context of a country that has been knocked down by nature, in the form of hurricane Maria, but by no means knocked out.

I mourn with the families, friends and associates who lost loved ones during that horrific night of September eighteenth into the wee hours of the nineteenth. The best tribute we can lay down in their memories is to create a built environment that mitigates the factors and circumstances that contributed to this tragic loss of life.

We entered into our thirty-ninth year of nationhood encircled by the theme “Building a Brighter Future Together”. For thirty – eight years, we had been working hard, sacrificed, suffered and made many new and valued friends in the international community. We were relentlessly pursuing the vision of a “Prosperous, Peaceful and Just Dominica”.

The cornerstone had been laid, and we have been putting in place the building blocks for a modern road and transportation sector; the hotel sector was on track for an exponential increase; agriculture, livestock and fisheries were on a fast growth trajectory; affordable housing had been brought within the reach of all, and the doors were open to those who were willing to learn and acquire new skills right up to the graduate level.

We had cause to see a future that was brighter for Dominicans, not in the distance, but one that was well within grasp.

Like you, my friends and citizens, I remain firmly and deeply committed to a Prosperous Dominica, a vibrant Dominica, a country where no one goes in need or is left behind.

The month of October 2017 finds our nation in a place where, despite our grief, disappointments and regrets, we are challenged to draw on the boldness that define us as Dominicans, and to see in the disaster of Maria, boundless opportunities for building that brighter future.

We have been recognised by the world as the Nature Island of the Caribbean. In this age of climate change, the opportunity that I see, and which I ask you to rally around, is also to make Dominica the first Climate Resilient Country in the World.

We will redesign, reconfigure and reprogram the systems and procedures that underpin economic and social activity so that the impact of any disaster on you and me, is considerably lessened, and the time taken for life to return to normal significantly reduced.

I believe we can get this done if we remain loyal and committed to the theme of this Independence celebration. The call for national unity carried in the theme, is not new; we hear that call at church gatherings, at social events, in the field of play, and especially during Independence.

That spirit of "togetherness" is alive and active as we go about assisting each other in covering the roofs of our homes, in providing a meal for our needy neighbour and generally in sharing the little that we have. The future will indeed be brighter if we keep that candle of unity burning.

My friends and citizens, during Independence, we focus on the many unique attributes that define us as Dominicans, and particularly our culture and cuisine. This is good. However, Independence 2017 and the events preceding our celebration, teach us that there is a wider definition of the togetherness around which we seek to build a brighter future.

Friendly governments within our region and the Regional Security Forces, were on our doorsteps within days. They were subsequently joined by representatives of various international bodies. Together, they have been providing support needed to stabilise the severe disruption of our lives after Maria. They have joined with us and together, we have put the worst of Maria behind us and are well on the way to recovery.

They have been with us in the past, and will be with us in the future. It is comforting and reassuring to know that we do not build alone, but that our regional institutions and friends in the international community are there to lend a hand when necessary.

I want you to know that we are not daunted. God willing, we plan a grand reunion next year. Let the spirit and culture of our nation shine wherever you may be.

My entire family joins me in wishing you a peaceful, reflective and joy-filled Independence.

May God bless land he has given us to build, Dominica.