**Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell**

**Prime Minister**

**ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF**

**THE UNVEILING OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING**

**MT. WHELDALE**

**June, 21, 2018**

“**Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”** Psalm 127

Ladies and gentlemen, today June 21st 2018, is a profoundly significant day for parliamentary democracy in our beloved country.

I stand before you, proud and humbled at the same time; with all the emotions and resolve that I can muster to give the fullest meaning to this occasion.

This is history. This is a moment in time that we all will remember forever.

Today, after months of construction and tremendous persistent effort, we are to receive the keys to this most majestic and prominent architectural construct, fittingly symbolic of our democracy, where our Houses of Parliament will now stand permanently.

We gather here, as one nation and people, together with our friends, ever conscious of where we have been and how we got here.

Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, we have always been a resilient Nation and people.

Our people, all of us, are our own enduring strength. We have demonstrated the same, time and time again, throughout history. We have been knocked down by nature and by human hands, and each time, we have gotten back up.

Along the way, we have always been cognizant of the hands that have shown up just in time to help us.

In this vein, sisters and brothers, I must reiterate our profound and heartfelt thanks to the Governments and peoples of the United Arab Emirates, Mexico and Australia.

Without their direct help, this structure would not have been a reality. They were true friends in word, and resolute in deed. They honored their commitment to assist Grenada, and they did so against the backdrop of their own needs. They did so when others, with dated ties, did not, or were unable to, for different reasons. That demonstration of friendship is one we will cherish, forever.

Our regional and international friendly Governments too, must be thanked, for their moral support of Grenada over the years.

They know the importance of state buildings in our part of the hemisphere. They know what this means for the consolidation of our democracy and our independence; and they have never failed to lend their voices in advocating for the rebuilding of this important symbolic institution.

I pause to recognize my regional colleagues and friends who are here; who have always demonstrated their solidarity and friendship to Grenada, and to me, in particular.

**(Call the VVIPs by names).**

Prime Minister Rowley of Trinidad and Tobago, Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves of a Saint Vincent, Prime Minister Allen Chastanet of Saint Lucia, and the Secretary General of CARICOM, Ambassador La Rocque.

Friends, I am grateful of your presence, understanding the schedules that you have and the enormous responsibilities before you. Indeed, you give meaning to the concept of One Caribbean.

Sisters and brothers, as we behold this important State symbol, we are all captivated by the beauty of the architecture, which befits the fascinating and panoramic view of St. George and the surrounding landscape: from the deep blue waters of the Grand Anse Bay, to the mountain ranges and the forts surrounding the capital.

Arising from the proverbial ashes of York House, our previous Parliament, which was completely destroyed by Hurricane Ivan in September 2004, now has a permanent home, here on the site of Mt. Wheldale.

Earlier this year, parliamentarians were given a tour of the building under construction. In all its beauty and splendor, I asked the architects and project managers what I considered then to be the most important question. With the recent hurricane season and the devastation I witnessed throughout the Islands fresh on my mind, I asked them “**can this building withstand a category 5/6 hurricane**?”

This, my brothers and sisters, is our new normal. Climate change and its effects are here to stay and we must be prepared to consider that phenomenon in all our decisions. Grenada has seen its fair share of destruction at the hands of hurricanes, including Ivan and Emily’s ruin of our major State buildings, such as the Houses of Parliament and the residence of the Governor General.

I have had the fortune (some may say misfortune, at times), to have led Grenada through many years and trials. I can, therefore, attest that Grenada’s parliamentary democracy has traversed a checkered history, but it is one which forms an inseparable part of our people’s struggle for social justice and liberation.

This little democracy, built on the foundation of our Nation’s greats, such as T.A. Marryshow, Eric Matthew Gairy and Maurice Bishop, was literally forged in sweat and blood.

This is why, fellow citizens of these beautiful isles, I am proud of all of us as a people. I am proud of the many men and women who understood and accepted that yes, while money could have been allocated elsewhere, it was necessary for us to restore this building as the house of the people.

As citizens, we have not always agreed on issues, but we all must be committed to Grenada’s development and future.

At a time when some politicians around the world bring more division than unity, I am mindful that here in the region, (and I speak mostly for Grenada), we are seeing the reverse, as our people draw closer to each other and confront together, the challenges we face.

This Social Partnership between Government, the Trade Union Movement, the Churches, the business community, Civil Society and the Non-governmental organizations, must never be taken for granted, for the role it plays in Grenada’s recent development.

I was particularly moved earlier, watching everyone—from all walks of life—every political, social, economic and religious strata, make their way up this hill to celebrate together the opening of this historic institution.

Somewhere, Theophilus is smiling. So too, is Cristophe.

Our Grenadian pride and unity of spirit are on full display.

Ladies and gentlemen, building Grenada has been the hallmark of the New National Party whenever it has occupied the seat of government. Over the years, we brought universal electrification and portable water to the nation. We built both the cricket and athletic stadia and rebuilt them after the 2004 Hurricanes.

We built and expanded the General Hospital; constructed the St. George’s Cruise Port; facilitated the transformation of the Lagoon area and the building of Port Louis.

Having returned to office in February 2013, after our sabbatical, we restored economic stability to this Nation and improved investor confidence and Grenada’s international reputation.

We rebuilt the athletic stadium, which now facilitates international Track and Field Meets.

We built the new diagnostic wing at the General Hospital, which is soon to be opened; and we substantially completed this our new Parliament Building here at Mt. Wheldale, which we will, in a moment, unveil to our people and the world. We have also built many roads and bridges.

But, my friends, we are more than a concrete government. We have not only built structures and infrastructure; we have built human capital—we have built people.

In just the last five years, in excess of one thousand students have received scholarships and other assistance to further their studies at home and abroad; many others have received skills training opportunities in their chosen fields.

We have made strides in improving productivity in our public service, and we continue to facilitate opportunities for the creation of small businesses and the implementation of Information Communication Technologies in our day to day life, study and work.

We have taken care of our elderly and our vulnerable citizens, and we continue to explore new ways to improve the standard of living of every Grenadian man, woman, boy and girl.

Our dedication to the holistic development of the State of Grenada is evident and we continue to work tirelessly to ensure that our trajectory is only forward. We must keep moving.

Sisters and brothers, as I conclude, I wish to underscore a most important point: It is the task and fullest intention of this Government to ensure that this Parliament gives voice to the hopes of everyone gathered here, your families and your friends.

This Parliament has been shaped to invite everyone in; to listen to the concerns of the people and to speak up for them. This building will forever channel aspirations; resolve conflicting views; and shape this country’s future.

I give the assurance today, that under my watch, and under any New National Party Government that I lead, this Parliament Building will always be a symbol of collaboration and the fullest representation for all our people.

It will reflect and respect our socioeconomic diversity, our myriad of dreams and interests.

In the absence of an official parliamentary opposition, this building will be the legitimate voice of our people—where differences are aired and where unity is fostered.

Sisters and brothers, on this hill, on this day, I pledge to uphold this most basic truth and promise: this parliament building is a Grenadian building. It was constructed by the people, for the people.

Now, it is my greatest pleasure and a memory that I will forever treasure as part of our legacy, to officially declare open this most majestic symbol: the House of the People.