

Address by Prime Minister Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell  
On the occasion of the Official Launch of the Agency for Reconstruction and  
Development Inc.  
Botanical Gardens, St. George's  
Tuesday, March 15, 2005 at 11 a.m.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is, indeed, a distinct privilege to share this occasion with the Board of Directors and Staff of the Agency for Reconstruction and Development, representatives of Governments, the donor community, the non-governmental organisations and other social partners.

I take the opportunity of this very special occasion to, once again, express the profound appreciation of the Government and people of Grenada, to everyone who has helped in the relief, recovery and reconstruction of Grenada, following the devastation caused by the passage of Hurricane Ivan just over six months ago.

When I recall the bleak images of broken buildings and broken lives; when I remember the destruction to our forests, our nutmeg trees and other vital agricultural crops that prevailed on September 8, 2004; I understand why visitors and others who were here soon after Ivan passed continue to praise the people of Grenada for our tenacity and sense of purpose to restore normalcy to our lives as quickly as possible.

The ARD has been part of this restoration. In listening to Mr. Andrews outline the activities undertaken by the ARD since its inception, it is evident that a significant amount of the activities of the Agency has focused on facilitating the efforts of others. This is very much in keeping with the mandate of the ARD to coordinate and to monitor.

I am particularly pleased that the ARD is working with the Department of Youth Development to ensure the needs of young people are addressed.

I say this in the context of stress related issues, but also in the provision of opportunities for job creation, for training, for the establishment of micro and small businesses, as well

as programmes to encourage more young people to become involved in farming and agro-processing.

Indeed, all entities involved in the rebuilding of Grenada should bear in mind that young people need to be integrally involved, not only in the rebuilding of our Country, but also in the strategic planning for the future.

Additionally, the need for an effective and reliable data base, particularly the statistical details relating to reconstruction, is crucial for future planning for all stakeholders. I am very pleased, therefore, to learn of the progress in this area.

As a statistician, I understand that compiling accurate data following such widespread destruction, when there are so many different groups involved and some degree of overlap is a very difficult task.

However, I believe the ARD, with the cooperation of Government ministries, the donors, the NGOs and everyone involved, will succeed.

Ladies and gentlemen, on February 25 the International Monetary Fund convened an Economic Forum in Washington tracking Grenada's recovery six months after Hurricane Ivan. I want to share with you an observation by Ms. Caroline Anstey, World Bank Country Director for the Caribbean Region regarding the response of donors.

Ms. Anstey told the Forum that in the case of Grenada, there was more of a coordinated donor response than there has been with other natural disasters in the Caribbean.

The ARD has the responsibility to ensure that, in the words of Ms. Anstey, "donors don't trip over each other in the process of providing assistance."

Sisters and brothers, there is no doubt that, as a Nation, we have made remarkable process in a mere six months. However, there is much, much more to be done.

The Government and people of Grenada will remain eternally grateful for all the assistance we are receiving; however, we will require significantly more financial, technical and other forms of support in order to rebuild our Country on a sustainable basis.

Indeed, I trust that the ARD will not lose the sense of a continuing urgent situation, as all stakeholders grapple with this very difficult post-Ivan reconstruction stage. While patience must prevail, we cannot become complacent.

The ARD must continue to prioritize and coordinate in the creation of new jobs, in the revitalization of the small business sector, in the reconstruction of schools, community centres and other public buildings, bridges, our road network, in the preparation of productive agricultural lands, in the expansion of our General Hospital and, indeed, improvements to all our health facilities. The list goes on.

The ARD has an enormous task ahead of it. I want to assure Mr. Andrews and his ARD team that the Grenadian people are counting on the ARD, as I am, my Cabinet colleagues and, I trust, all parliamentarians.

All of us assembled here in this room must continue to remind ourselves that we are in the business of re-building people's lives. That is the key objective that we must never forget.

I look to the ARD to both keep this focus on people and to maintain the sense of urgency that initiated the creation of the ARD in the first place.

Indeed, sisters and brothers, today is a great day in the history of Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique.

It symbolizes the commencement of an all-inclusive and continuing process that is enabling our Nation to 'build back better', not only in the reconstruction and

development; but also in preparing ourselves for future challenges that Mother Nature may impose on us.

In closing, I want to wish the Chairman and Board of Directors and the staff of the ARD, on behalf of the Government and people of Grenada, all the very best and to congratulate you on the occasion of the official launch of the Agency for Reconstruction and Development. Thank you.