Speech for the handing over of the new Parliament Building –Mt. Wheldale, St George’s

June 21, 2018

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament, Ladies and Gentlemen

Today marks a special historic moment for our nation. All Grenadians throughout the length and breadth of Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique must be exceedingly proud. Some may not have thought that this day would come but with the generous support of friendly Governments, an important symbol of our democracy has been restored. The long days of despair are ended. This is a day of celebration; a day of gratitude. The primacy of Parliament reigns supreme!

In 2004, our vulnerability to natural disasters became evident.

Ninety percent of our physical infrastructure was destroyed in a matter of hours. Our historical buildings were not spared and on September 8th 2004, we woke up to scenes of devastation and destruction, and York House, the home of our Parliament since the year 1807, lay in ruins.

However, our belief in, and commitment to Parliamentary Democracy was resolute and bolstered the vision to create a permanent home for our nation’s Parliament.

The Governments of the United Mexican States, the United Arab Emirates and the Commonwealth of Australia readily came to our assistance and provided the much-needed funding for this momentous undertaking. We are truly grateful for the generous assistance given to our nation by these three countries, as without it, we would not be sitting here today in this magnificent structure.

The courage, will and determination to undertake the construction of this building is a living testimony to the great importance attached to our democratic system of government.

The construction of this Parliament Building was truly a mammoth Grenadian undertaking with international input. The chief engineer of the contracting company, Quinn and Company, travelled to The People’s Republic of China to ensure that the steel frame which had been ordered, was well on the way to completion and ready to be shipped. The Hurricane proof aluminium windows came from Columbia and the beautiful teak woodwork covering the walls, came from neighbouring Trinidad and Tobago. The marble stucco cladding, made from finely chiselled marble, adorning sections of the outer and inner walls of the building, and adding to its magical sparkle and beauty, was sourced in the United States of America. It seems like the whole world was involved in this project and was as anxious as we were to see Grenada’s Parliament Building proudly erected again.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament,

I have many fond memories of visits to the site of this building during the construction phase and of chatting with the construction workers and tradesmen and women as they diligently performed their assigned tasks. Having worked on this project and now seeing it come to a glorious conclusion, many of them will experience a feeling of joy tinged with nostalgia. From this hilltop in Mt. Wheldale, I am sure many of these skilled and talented construction workers had their eyes set on working on the restoration of a nearby building.

Congratulations to our gifted architects Brian and Trevor Bullen of COCOA, who ensured that once inside the curved chamber one would feel like nutmegs nestled within the pericarp halves, a truly Pure Grenada, Spice of the Caribbean feeling.

Congratulations also to the main contractor Quinn and Company and its team of hard working construction workers and tradesmen and women, and sub-contractors who worked tirelessly to make our nation’s parliament building the magnificent structure it has turned out to be. The Coat of Arms on the wall behind me is the work of a talented French Artist Ms. Geraldine L’Annec who has made Grenada her home.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament

I proudly recall that my grandmother, Eva Ollivierre Sylvester, was the first woman to be elected to the Legislative Council in Grenada in 1952. Therefore it would be remiss of me not to mention how delighted I am today by the representation in both our houses of Parliament of strong, talented, patriotic and dedicated women of our country.

Our Parliament records the largest number of women than at any other time in our history.

As a nation, we have much to celebrate.

Grenada’s Parliament now has a permanent home, a magnificent, modern facility; a true sanctuary where the gender balance is evident, where high values are expected to be upheld, individuals respected, our forefathers remembered, history recalled, ideals revered, and memories treasured. A home where the pressing issues affecting our nation, will be discussed and debated with the highest level of dignity and candour – a place where fair administration of matters and wise legislation will be produced by all who assemble and work here, ensuring the orderly development and National security of our nation.

Mr. President. Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament

Let the quality of your debates be as high a standard and as true a reflection of this magnificent, imposing structure, sitting on the hilltop of Mt. Wheldale, as a citadel overlooking the lagoon of our picturesque capital -with an exterior that bears a striking resemblance to the Parthenon in Athens, the birth place of world democracy, and an interior reminiscent of our prized and highly valued nutmeg. It is indeed a Phoenix rising from the ashes.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of Parliament

Let the tenor of your debates reflect the magnificence of these textured teak and marble walls, and fill us with hope for our future.

Finally, I wish to implore all Grenadians to cherish this new Parliament Building, to protect and preserve it so that it would last for several generations of Parliamentarians to come.

May God bless you and may God bless Grenada.

I thank you.