

THRONE SPEECH

by

Her Excellency

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GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF SAINT LUCIA

**On the occasion of the Formal Opening of the Fifth Session
of the Ninth Parliament of Saint Lucia**

Monday April 19, 2010

MADAM PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE SENATE

MADAM SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tradition calls for the first order of business at the opening of a new session of Parliament to be an address from The Throne, in which an outline is presented of Government's proposals for the advancement of the country's development, within the framework of policies, plans and objectives established at the commencement of its term of office, allowing for possible refinements along the way. The traditional nature of this exercise however, can never diminish the seriousness of its purpose.

Governments, having been given a mandate by the people, are required to report on the progress achieved in discharging this mandate. The Address from The Throne is intended to do that and to speak to policies and programmes to be pursued in furtherance of the mandate.

Plans and proposals for economic and social advancement are subject to many environmental factors; some are internal and can therefore respond to a measure of control, while others are external and beyond our ability to influence. The effects of globalization, and the multi-lateralisation of trade in goods and services, are important external factors in this regard.

We have recently been made only too painfully aware of this transmission when the entire global financial system became infected by tainted intangible assets in particular, which turned out to have been overvalued or of questionable value, creating, in its wake, a worldwide crisis which has resulted in a global recession and in unprecedented job losses, as confidence in the global marketplace plummeted. That we were not the perpetrators of this crisis, was of no consequence; but together with other developing countries, we have been among its victims.

Madam President

Madam Speaker

Alongside these adverse economic circumstances, our country must grapple with a myriad of social issues which have implications for our immediate and long term future.

It is not difficult to conclude therefore that this formal opening of the Fifth Session of the Ninth Parliament of Saint Lucia, in many ways finds our beloved nation at the crossroads. The actions we take from now on and the decisions we make, given where we are now positioned, will to a large extent determine our destiny, determine whether we sink or swim, whether our country is able to navigate the treacherous waters ahead of us. It is all about choices, and the choices that we make will define our future since we may have to live with them forever.

We can choose to harness our limited productive resources in a manner that seeks to take account of the interests of all, particularly the most vulnerable among us, or we can adopt the selfish posture of “to each his own”.

But the lessons of the recent past, which should be all too fresh in our minds, have forcibly brought home to us the futility of self-centeredness, as natural and man-made disasters, locally, regionally, and internationally, have completely exposed our own vulnerabilities.

Historically it has taken such adverse circumstances to galvanise Saint Lucians to act in a unified manner, to bring out their true sense of patriotism and national pride. In September last year, an important health facility, the St. Jude Hospital, was destroyed by fire, thus compromising health services particularly to the southern part of our island. Once again, our people responded admirably. Whether it was in rescuing patients and others endangered by the fire or in making donations towards the reconstruction effort, Saint Lucians have stood tall and so deserve the highest commendation.

My Government wishes to convey its most sincere appreciation to all those who in one way or other, made their contribution during this catastrophe. Special praise must be reserved for the management and hard working staff of St. Jude Hospital for their dedication, patience and commitment. We also take the opportunity to thank the youth, the sportsmen and women of Saint Lucia, for their understanding and co-operation at the temporary unavailability of the George Odlum Stadium which now houses St. Jude.

The resources collected from local contributions have been augmented by numerous donations from our international friends and partners to whom we must also express appreciation for

coming to our assistance in this time of need. Their generosity and that of our own people will enable us to commence reconstruction shortly, whether at the existing site or at a new location.

The devastation caused by the earthquake in our sister CARICOM nation of Haiti last January, was a stark reminder to us of the destructive power of natural disasters, and of the fact that hurricanes and tropical storms are not the only natural phenomena to which this region is exposed. It highlights the need for us to implement strategies for disaster risk reduction, a requirement to which my government attaches the highest priority. That a Saint Lucian national was among the victims of the disaster served to highlight even further the interconnection between us as CARICOM people.

The prolonged drought conditions which we have recently experienced and which caused severe interruptions to our water supply, bring to the fore the imperative for conservation of our resources, the need to explore and develop alternative sources, as well as our particular vulnerabilities in the water sector. Such an eventuality had not been foreseen and catered for in the proposed privatization of the water sector. This vindicates my Government's decision to suspend the process to allow for a consideration of all the issues.

My Government believes that those who present themselves for service to our country through representation within these hallowed walls must understand that when they do so, they are subject to a higher standard of scrutiny and accountability.

It is in this context that, during my address to the third session of this ninth Parliament, I had indicated Government's intention to establish a Commission of Inquiry to inquire into certain matters which suggested the possibility of maladministration. The report of the Ramsahoye Commission has been released and made available to all Saint Lucians. It has also been vigorously debated in Parliament. My Government takes no pleasure in the findings of the report that there was indeed maladministration. What is more important for our governance, are the lessons to be drawn from these findings, and how we proceed to ensure that the possibilities for such incidences are eliminated, or at least minimized in the future. Steps have already been taken to commence the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission and my Government will continue to hold itself to the highest standards of accountability.

Madam President

Madam Speaker

Permit me to return for a moment to the economic conditions which our country has had to face in recent times. Unemployment in our major markets has taken its toll on tourist arrivals and our hotels have had to struggle to survive even while operating within a framework of discounted rates. With a global bank credit squeeze, Foreign Direct Investment has slowed particularly in the tourism sector where planned projects and some already under implementation have had to be held in abeyance or postponed, thereby affecting employment in the construction sector.

Remittances from overseas have decreased, not only in respect of cash transfers, but also in terms of other support provided in the form of goods sent by relatives overseas.

However through careful management and guided intervention, my Government has been able to stave off the worst of the fallout from the global financial crisis. This has been achieved through various measures, including stimulus programmes, and the implementation of a substantial capital programme, which have secured jobs and protected the vulnerable.

Having managed to overcome what appears to have been the worst of the crisis, our country is now well poised to take advantage of improving conditions in the world economy, as we seek to grow our own economy and make our country more resilient. My Government's development strategy is a proactive response to the severe impact of the global recession. We recognise the need to initiate an action plan to achieve sustained recovery in the medium term, while keeping in focus the need for long term development.

This provides the background to the economic strategy being pursued. Short and medium term strategies must simultaneously set the stage for ensuring the well-being of this and future generations.

In that regard Government's economic strategy will be based on:

- Identifying and injecting resources into emerging and existing sectors with growth potential;

- ▶ Ensuring a sound and credible macroeconomic framework including the strengthening of revenue collection, rationalisation of expenditure, stimulating investment, and long term debt sustainability;

- ▶ Working with the private sector and civil society to heal the ills of our time and to weave together a more nurturing and enduring environment, thereby strengthening the social and moral fabric of our nation.

It is my Government's firm belief that this will go a long way to paving the road to recovery and to instilling confidence both at home and abroad.

International Co-operation and Regional Integration will continue to be at the core of our economic policy. My Government wishes to place on record our appreciation to all the friendly countries and international organizations which have come to our aid. We will seek to deepen such cooperation especially within the context of the Regional Integration Movement. In that regard we look forward to the official launch of the OECS Economic Union Treaty in June. We are also committed to the Eight Point Stabilisation and Growth programme for the ECCU countries, and later this year, we intend to seek the endorsement of Parliament for this programme as part of a wider National Economic and Social Re-engineering Initiative.

Madam President

Madam Speaker

We live in very challenging times, and nowhere are those challenges more evident than in the apparent deterioration of our social fabric that seems to have become the order of the day. The evidence is all around us and it is difficult not to observe it.

This calendar year started with an above average number of homicides. The bold and brazen manner in which these acts are committed, have undoubtedly caused law abiding citizens to

wonder, whether we are safe when we walk the streets, when we are at our workplaces, and even when we are within our very homes.

These acts demonstrate a lack of respect for life and for the dignity of the human person, as enshrined in our Constitution. When we extend this to all the other criminal acts that often go unreported in the media, the acts of deviance, the anti-social behaviour, the indiscipline in our schools and in the wider society, including even an apparent direct attack on our justice system, we really do understand the magnitude of the problem. Not only is our national security under threat, but so also are our institutions of governance – the very foundation of our society.

Madam President

Madam Speaker

We can take no comfort in the notion that such acts of lawlessness and indiscipline may also be taking place in other jurisdictions. We should not cite any trend regionally or internationally, true though it may be, to justify such criminality on our doorstep. Saint Lucia must act now. Collectively, the vast majority of us, who are law abiding citizens must take back control of our society, return to our values; of good citizenship, good manners, love for one another, good neighbourliness, being our brother's or sister's keeper, respect for each other, among others. In short, we need to comply with the Golden Rule which admonishes us to "do unto others as we would like them do unto us."

That our future is threatened is painfully obvious when we consider that most of this deviant behaviour is manifested among our young people. We are losing a generation, and this is not the time for us to engage in political chicanery and trivialities. These are not solutions but hindrances to our problems. We have a moral obligation to embrace what is positive, to encourage and to instil values that will contribute to the advancement of our social ethos. It is our bounden duty to promote a message that is positive, that is uplifting, and not discard it because of its source.

Madam President

Madam Speaker

It is also our duty to encourage and to support the efforts of those who, driven only by love of country, selflessly undertake initiatives that promote social stability and enhance social consciousness. There is a definite need for us to rekindle that Volunteer Spirit that was so synonymous with Saint Lucian life in days gone by.

Three weeks ago, my Government was associated with the launching of a publication which catalogued the contributions to their homeland of 100 illustrious Saint Lucians. This was a project approved and funded by my Government, as part of the observance of the thirtieth (30th) anniversary of our independence.

At this time of challenge to, and erosion of, our social institutions and of the very architecture of our society, it is important that our young persons in particular, have role models whom they can emulate. My Government hopes that the contributions, achievements, commitment, discipline and dedication of these 100 icons, will serve as an inspiration to the rest of us, and propel us to extend even further the boundaries of our possibilities.

Madam President

Madam Speaker

Recognizing that the magnitude of the problems that we face calls for a national effort, my Government will during this session of Parliament pursue an agenda designed to re-establish the pre-eminence of our institutions of governance.

We are aware that these problems will not disappear overnight, in the same way that they have evolved over an extended period. It has also been well documented that there is an inverse correlation between the level of economic activity and some forms of deviant behaviour. Any approach towards finding solutions must be multi-disciplinary, multi-faceted, and structured in a manner to achieve short, medium and long term objectives.

My Government's approach to addressing those adverse social circumstances will reflect its desire to achieve certain strategic goals and objectives within a specified timeframe.

In the short term, the crime fighting capacity of the police will be enhanced through the intensification of training programmes, the procurement of additional and more sophisticated equipment, and the removal of certain legal impediments which hinder the police in the execution of their functions.

Short to Medium term initiatives will take the form of short-term employment-generating and training activities, such as those provided under the HOPE Project and other opportunities provided by the economic recovery programme.

In the longer term, programmes to open up and provide facilities to communities, particularly inner-city communities, will be accelerated. My Government has received the second report of the National Consultative Council. One of the major recommendations contained in that report is the establishment of a Council on Social Reform to promote holistic and efficient social development through harmonised interventions by the private and public sectors and civil society. My Government finds this idea particularly attractive and during this session of Parliament steps will be taken to create a legal basis for such a Council. Consultation with various stakeholders on a draft Bill for its establishment before it is transmitted to Parliament has already begun.

Madam President

Madam Speaker

It was our own Nobel Laureate Sir Arthur Lewis who argued that education is the ultimate weapon with which to fight poverty. If we accept that there is a correlation between poverty and crime, then it is reasonable to conclude that education will also, in the long term, serve to reduce the incidence of crime.

Therefore, the promotion of social cohesion will also entail steps in the field of education aimed at improving the employability and career mobility of youth and other marginalized sections of the population through training, mentoring, retraining and enterprise development activities. Programmes such as the book bursary initiative, the school feeding and transportation support

programmes will continue to be targeted at the marginalized and vulnerable sections of our society.

Considerable investments continue to be made by Government in the upgrading of the physical plant of our schools in order to enhance the learning environment. My Government will accelerate steps to further improve access to tertiary education and in that regard, we expect considerable progress to be made on the initiative to upgrade Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, which was previously announced.

Madanm Pwezidan

Madanm Speaker

Sé twadisyon péyi-a pou koumansé chak sèsyon Paléman nèf épi an Diskou pwézanité pa Gouvènè Jénéwal péyi-a. Paski sa ka pwan kou toulézanné, sa vlé pa di nou pa ni pou pwan'y sèwèzman. O kontwè, sé diskou-sala tout Gouvèdman ka sèvi pou bay jan péyi-a wapo asou sa ki ka afèkté péyi-a, ki kalité anbètman yo ka waonkontwé, ki nouvo pogwé yo té kapab wéalizé, épi pou anonsé pwojé twavay yo an lanné-a ki ka vini-an.

Tout moun ka tann épi wè sa ki ka pasé an péyi-a, osi byen sa ka pwan kou oliwon latè-a: bon kon mové. Nou ka tann palé di dézas, katastwòf, ékonomi an fayit, aksyon kwiminèl; mé osi, gwan siksé a tout nivo, bon natiwèl pou yonnalòt, bon konpwann ant pèp épi péyi, lanmityé, lachawité, konpasyon pou pochen-nou. Konsa, tout moun sa apwésyé ki, épi tout sé boulvèsman-sala pa isi épi pa la, Sent Lisi ka touvé kò'y sé jou-sala an mitan an katchimen. Koté pou tounen? Ki diwèksyon pou pwan? Si late té ka palé, nou pé té sa mandé'y. Mé kon'y yé la-a, sé asou bon syans-nou nou ni pou dépann pou désidé diwèksyon-an ki kay mennen péyi-a siksé. Sé fo nou byen chwézi, paski nou pé ni pou viv lèwèstan lavi-nou épi sé disizyon-on nou kay pwan-an an sé tan kwitik sala.

Madanm Pwézidan

Madanm Speaker

Sé pa pou di nou pa sav sa ki an lentéwé nou, épi an lentéwé péyi-a. Gadé ki mannyè, dènyèman, an Sèptanm lanné pasé, tout Sent Lisyen vini ansanm, san chikann, san dézagwéman, san mové zimè, san kouyontwi, pou twavay an lentéwé péyi-a. Difé St. Jude-la moutwé nou tout sa ki posib lè nou mété tèt-nou ansanm, lè nou pa égois, ében ka gadé twòp pou ko-nou. I moutwé ki nou ni lanmityé pou péyi-nou, pou pochen-nou. Médam é Misyé, si sé pou nou èspéwé dézas konsa pou moutwé belté kawaktè-nou, i kay twò ta; nou kay ni chans péwi! Sé pa lè mové tan asou'y pou'y kouwi kouvè kay-ou.

En palan di sa, Gouvèdman ka pwan lokasyon diskou-sala pou wimèsyé tout moun ki mété lanmen, diwan difé-a épi apwé, pou wétabli lopital-la: sé twavayè lopital-la, sé ponpyé-a, tout sa ki ka wèsté an vwazinaj lopital-la; tout sa ki fè kontwibusyon swé an péyi-a menm ében lòt péyi; gouvèdman, òganizasyon épi enstitusyon étwanjé; tout sa ki touve kò yo dékonpoté ében jennen paski yo pa sa sèvi Stadium-lan. Anfin, tout moun! Nou kay an pozisyon, an sé jou-a ki ka vini-an, pou anonsé sa nou kay fè épi St. Jude

Ankò tibwen, nou té kay ni an lòt dézas asou kont-nou, si mové tan sèk-la, mové kawenm-lan ki pasé-a té kontiné pli lontan. Kawenm-sala moutwé nou yonn, dé lison. Sé pou nou trouvé mannèv pou konsèvé pli dlo; pou otjipé épi mennajé sous dlo oliwon péyi-a; pou doubout détwi lafowé péyi-a; pou potéjé lanviwonman-nou. Menm si ou tann di ki lawivyè epi lanmè paka wifizé, se pa pou nou jété tout sa nou pa vlé andidan yo. Nou ka toufé yo.

Mé nou ni an lòt go mennas an padlapòt-nou sé jou sala. Sitouasyon kwim an péyi-a ni nou tout anbazoudi, ozabwa. Lè kwiminel koumansé ka ataké jis lalwa, ki sipozé potéjé nou, i lè pou nou doubout épi mandé kò-nou kèstyon. Ki mannyè nou trouvé kò nou an sitouasyon kwitik-sala? Kisa nou chak sa fè pou pansé ében djéwi maleng sala? A sézè isi, sé pa lè pou chaché koté pou mété blanm ében pou tounen do-nou asou sitouasyon-a. I ka afèkté nou tout, paski nou tout ka viv sé jou-sala an siwèksyon, épi an pèwèz, an kay-nou, an lawi péyi-a, épi menm an plas twavay nou.

Gouvèdman ka kontiné fè fòs kò'y pou anmilyowé sitouasyon-an pou wabat tout sé mennas-sala ki ka bay ti péyi-nou-an mové wilonmen. Yo kay pasé plizyè lwa nèf diwan sèsyon Paléman-sala pou wanfòsé sé sa ki ja la-a, mé nou tout ni wèsponsabilité pou sipòté épi potéjé sé lwa-sala. Sé sèl mannyè nou kay genyen about sé twakasman-an péyi-a ka èkspéwiansé sé jou-sala. Sé pa pou nou twété sé aksyon kwiminèl-sala kon moun difé pay kann. Pozisyon-an twé pli sèwyé pasé sa. Annou doubout ansanm. Débwiyé pa péché.

Madam President

Madam Speaker

Permit me to now turn to the Legislative Agenda which my Government intends to pursue during this session of Parliament.

CRIME :

My Government is very concerned about the spate of violent crime that is affecting our country. The murders and mutilations that have been reported in the media have been nauseating. Particularly worrying has been the fact that even police officers, a court prosecutor and a magistrate – the very persons whose departments seek to enforce our laws and uphold justice in our society – have become targets of violence. Citizens of this State can no longer fold their arms while assaults on our most sacred institutions are launched in broad daylight.

The paramount duty of Government is to ensure the security of its citizens. We cannot abdicate this duty. We must maintain the rule of law at all times, and with all our might protect the judiciary which is the bulwark of our democracy and the fortification of our Country.

Accordingly our legislative agenda will address this by providing law enforcers with the means to combat crime. In doing so the following will be addressed:

1. Policing

My Government will continue its efforts at developing laws, regulations and a Code of Ethics for Police Officers to enhance the powers of the Police. Some of the measures to be adopted were

outlined at some length in last year's Throne Speech. Some progress has already been made in these and other matters including:

Witness care and protection;

Apprehension of offenders beyond our borders;

Cyber crimes and others related to the information and communication technology sector;

The Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act;

The Protective Services Act;

The Private Security Act;

It is expected that the outstanding issues will be addressed in this new Parliamentary Session

2. Other Sectors

2.1. Financial Sector Stability

Notwithstanding our concern about crime, we cannot ignore the needs of other sectors of our society or our obligations at the regional and international levels. Accordingly, we will aggressively pursue the enactment of laws aimed at bringing stability to our financial sector. Government will expedite the enactment of the remaining bills recommended by the Monetary Council of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank to harmonise and consolidate the sub-region's financial sector. These will include:

The Financial Services Regulatory Authority Bill for the independent monitoring of the financial sector;

The Insurance Bill; and

The Commercial Code Amendment Bill.

At the local level too, Government has a duty to protect taxpayers from wastage and loss of public funds as a result of non-compliance with the country's financial laws. Three Bills will therefore be tabled in this Parliamentary session to require prior parliamentary approval of the full details of Government Loans and Guarantees, and to facilitate the recovery of debts to Government.

2.2 Treaties and Conventions

My Government will continue to work on the enactment and ratification of those treaties and conventions which are still outstanding from the last Parliamentary session; among them, the Economic Partnership Agreement, the Caribbean Community Skilled Nationals Amendment Act, and the OECS Economic Union Treaty.

2.3 Implementation of Legislation already passed by

Parliament

A number of Acts that have been passed but not yet implemented will become operational in this Parliamentary Session. Among them will be the Labour Code which was passed in 2006, but to which some amendments have been proposed. A commencement date will be set after these amendments have been passed in Parliament.

2.4 Amendments

A number of existing laws are down for review during this Parliamentary Session. Legislation in the sphere of Family Law will be amended to address many identified deficiencies in the areas of Child Care and Adoption, Custody and Access, Child Maintenance and Domestic Violence. In the area of trade, the External Trade Act 1996 will be reviewed. So will the Local Government Ordinance Chapter 239 of 1947 to facilitate the smooth operation of Local Government Authorities; the Fiscal Incentives Act of 1974 to provide for a more systematic and equitable granting of incentives to entrepreneurs; and the Micro and Small Scale Business Enterprise Act.

2.5 New legislation

Finally, among the new pieces of legislation which my Government proposes to enact during this Session are:

The National Symbols Act to engender national pride and national identity;

A Justices of the Peace Act to provide a code of conduct and guidelines for Justices of the Peace;

A Forest Act to strengthen the protection of the forests; and

The establishment of a Law Reform and Review Commission to develop local capacity to revise and update our laws.

3. Constitutional Reform Commission:

The Constitutional Reform Commission which was established by Statutory Instrument in July 2004 to *review and reform the Constitution of Saint Lucia* has been holding extensive dialogue in order to consider appropriate changes to the Constitution. During this Parliamentary Session my Government anticipates the submission of the Reports of the Constitutional Review Commission to the Speaker of the House of Assembly.

4. Accession to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ):

During this Parliamentary Session my Government will seriously consider whether Saint Lucia should accede to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) as Saint Lucia's final Court of Appeal in Civil and Criminal matters. Government acknowledges the sovereignty of the countries in the region and reposes its confidence in the capabilities of the Caribbean's highly experienced and respected judiciary. It intends to engage all political groups and civil society to arrive at a decision.

Madanm Pwezidan

Madanm Speaker

Tou piti kon nou piti, Sent Lisi pa manchòt. Nou pa dènyé pyon adan an danm anpami sé péyi latè-a non pli. Nou sa doubout épi lé pli go péyi èk débwiyé pou kò nou. Jan Sent Lisi ka voyajé toupatou oliwon latè-a, épi koté yo twavésé, yo ka kité mak-yo an kalité kontwibusyon-yo, kalité twavay-yo, épi kwayans-lan èk konfyans-lan yo ni an sa yo désidé fè. Sé pou wézon sala nou ka pwépa wé pou wisivwè Sent Lisyen ki kay sòti toupatou an jwiyé lanné-sala si Dyé vlé, pou sélébwé pèp Sent Lisi : ni sa ki ka wété isi, osi byen kon sa ki wézidan lòt péyi.

Tout Sent Lisyen sé yonn. Sé konmisyon-sala nou vlé voyé bay tout jan péyi-a. Nou ka plédé Sent Lisyen pou wéfléchi asou mannyè ayèl-nou té ka viv an konminoté, épi nou ka ankouwajé yo pwan menm chimen-sala pou viv an linyon èk lanmitye épi yonnalòt. Kon Chantwèl-la di :“Si yonn tonbé, yonnalòt sipòté lòt”. Sé konsèy-sala ki kay asisté nou détwi sé mennas-la ki ka jennen pwogwé péyi-a. Bwa péyi-nou-an pé pliyé, mé sé pa pou nou kité’y kasé, paski nou tout sé yonn.

Madam President

Madam Speaker

There can be little doubt that as a small nation seeking to find our place in a world environment that is becoming increasingly less sensitive to the situation of countries like ours, we can be justifiably proud of our accomplishments. Our democracy remains strong as evidenced by the often heated debates that take place within these chambers.

Our people have travelled the globe and have left their imprints wherever they have been, always displaying a sense of community, despite the realities of geography. “**Tout Sent Lisyen Sé Yonn**” remains the rallying call, even more appropriate for this year, as we celebrate “Homecoming” in July, when Saint Lucians from across the world will descend upon their island home.

For many it will be a renewal, a kind of sabbatical, a re-dedication to their country, re-emphasising unity, interdependence and patriotism. Let us seize this moment to demonstrate to the world our sense of moral authority, civic responsibility and a desire for social equity.

We can embrace this opportunity to build on the foundation already laid for us by our forefathers, for a promising future for ourselves, our children and future generations, notwithstanding the realities of a hostile world. But it is the threats to our nation from within, which could ultimately prove to be the greatest impediments to our success, and which we must eliminate.

My Government pledges to use all its energies during this Parliamentary Session and beyond, towards realising a brighter future for our country.

It is therefore with a sense of optimism derived from my abiding faith in the strength of character and will power of my fellow Saint Lucians everywhere, that I formally declare open the Fifth Session of the Ninth Parliament of Saint Lucia.