



The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**LAUNCH OF THE UWI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FOR
DEVELOPMENT JUSTICE (ISD)**

(ADDRESS)

Message By

Dr the Honourable Nyan Gadsby-Dolly

Minister of Education

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10:00am

SALUTATIONS

Good morning!

I begin with the words of a famous calypso:

One race (de Caribbean man)
 From de same place (de Caribbean man)
 Dat make de same trip (de Caribbean man)
 On de same ship (de Caribbean man)
 So we must push one common intention
 Is for a better life in de region
 For we women, and we children
 Dat must be de ambition of de Caribbean man

These words, penned 45-odd years ago by the Mighty Stalin, still resonate deeply with the Caribbean's commitment to social mobility, and the visceral yearning for development, equality and equity buried deep in our DNA.

The modern Caribbean society consists largely of people who came; relocated here in different eras, with unique journeys and paradigms, which have coalesced into a Caribbean psyche that is underpinned by our commitment to strive.

- We strive for unity
- We strive for recognition
- We strive for equality
- We strive for development
- We strive for justice

Today we gather in this Caribbean Institution of higher education, indelible evidence of the success of our striving for unity and development. We gather here to celebrate innovation, expansion, resilience, reimagining, rebranding and renewal.

The launch of the UWI's International School for Development Justice resonates on a multiplicity of levels- personally, politically, socially and psychologically.

Personally- I am a proud UWI alumna, as are many of the leaders in our region. Being able to live and study in the Caribbean, in our own region-grown institution, promotes nationalism, and regionalism, which are critical precursors for empowered, collaborative and productive striving.

To see the UWI moving purposefully into the global online education market is a proud experience, as it places us, the Caribbean, in a space dominated by non-Caribbean players. It is bold, frontal action, which signals our intention to sit at all tables, in all sectors.

As a Caribbean Woman Leader, this evokes strong sentiments, as it brings to mind our assertiveness in another sphere- the region's leadership role in gender equality. We Caribbean women sit at our tables. The Caribbean leads in this regard, and will continue to lead... This region has the third highest level of parity globally, at 74.3%. We, the UWI, ranked the number one university in the Caribbean, and rated within the top 1.5% of universities in the world- we have led, and we now step further into our established leadership position as the first institution of its kind to offer access to online higher education which is grounded in the core principles of social justice, equity and ethics. This is worthy of our pride.

In typical Caribbean fashion, I feel my feet tingle, my hands jingle and an irresistible urge to:

Raise my voice on high

Sing of my Caribbean pride;

Sing it loud and strong

As our hearts beat as one...

Celebrate in song as we rise to heights where we belong...

Sound the victory drum

For CARICOM...

This quote from our official CARICOM song segues smoothly into the political pride I experience today.

As Minister of Education in a country privileged to host a landed UWI Campus, I am acutely aware of the intricacies of its financial operations. The unstinting, unwavering and consistent commitment of the Governments of

the region to the UWI has been nothing short of remarkable, and this must be applauded and preserved.

Likewise, the efforts (may I refer to them as Herculean?) of the UWI to rationalize operational budgets with fiscal realities is commendable, and does not go unnoticed nor unappreciated. Please permit me, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, to congratulate and thank the UWI for this. I am certain that in this regard, I echo the sentiments of my regional Ministerial colleagues; policy makers who are tasked with balancing what sometimes seems like the “unbalanceable”.

However, as necessity is to invention, so too resource scarcity to sustainable operations. The common thread of sustainability is woven throughout the tapestry of this School we launch today- not only in its intended curricular offerings, but in the very foundational underpinnings of its potential financial value to the UWI.

In response to the political directives to lean, lean lean; shave, shave, shave, justify, justify, justify- which are symptoms of our external pressures- comes the UWI’s International School of Development Justice- with a double focus on sustainability that sends a clear signal of the UWI’s intention to play an active role in solving its own challenges.

From a political standpoint, this is deeply appreciated and wholly supported. For we must not hide from, nor try to outrun our challenges; and worse yet, resort to hiding our heads in the sand. We must face them like the resilient Caribbean people we are and find innovative solutions. Our ancestors were revolutionaries and solutionaries... we are no less so.

The UWI’s International School of Development Justice is both a revolution and a solution, and the research and data-driven decision-making associated with this project lie at the heart of the hope, and I dare say expectation of success with which it is regarded by the governments of the region.

Indeed, even as we, the policy makers, celebrate this milestone with the UWI today, we appreciate that “De Journey Now Start”- and to the implementing arm, the Global Campus, I offer these words:

Do not give up; don’t let up

For we were put here to survive...

We are in charge of our lives.

Never look back, look ahead

Never say die til' you dead...

I say to travel on, UWI, travel on...

The students of the Caribbean, the quality of our society, and the ascendancy and competitiveness of the Caribbean region, rely on not just a surviving, but a thriving UWI.

The data tells us that there are approximately 50,000 students pursuing various tertiary-level certifications across UWI's 5 campuses; at tuition rates heavily subsidized by the governments of the region. These graduates form our professional cadre, the citizens who drive the national developmental agendas of our archipelagic states.

Consider for a moment if the UWI were to disappear off the map; consumed by its inability to be financially sustainable. What percentage of those 50,000 citizens would be able to fulfill their dream of tertiary education? What would then become of our professional class?

I offer myself as an example- in an education landscape without a UWI campus in my homeland, and without government policy to provide tuition assistance, what would my own trajectory have been? As a lover of Geography, I was not in a financial position to travel to UWI, Jamaica to read for that degree... but I was able to manage, to read for Analytical Chemistry in my home country. With God's grace, I was able to sit under the shade of trees planted many years prior to my birth; I was a beneficiary of the recommendations of the Asquith and Irvine Commissions, which saw the development of Colonial Universities as a mechanism to "rear the local leaders of the future".

With the arrival of the Independence era in the 1960s and 70s, came the rapid expansion of the UWI, led by regional visionaries who understood that as we embarked on our post-colonial journey, the Caribbean required greater investment in education at the highest levels to provide for the social mobility of our citizens and that of our Caribbean societies.

It is within this context that I posit the following- the launch of this International School, and all that it represents for the potential sustainability

of the UWI, is a seminal, life-changing event, which penetrates to the heart of our society and our people.

Please join me in recognizing and saluting the work of our current Vice Chancellor, Sir Hiliary Beckles, in bringing this project to fruition. This project is as significant to the young citizens of today, including my own 2 daughters-themselves students of the UWI, it is as significant as the work of Sirs William Arthur Lewis, Philip Sherlock, and Roy Marshall, former Vice Chancellors of the UWI, during whose tenure much of the university's expansion was accomplished.

Last, but by no means least, I tarry a little longer to address the psychological impact of this School's launch. It is, to me, indeed apt that the UWI, a Caribbean University with a colonial history, seeks to offer training in Development Justice, which is grounded in redistributive justice, economic justice, gender and social justice, ecological justice and accountability to peoples.

The Caribbean Region, itself, has much to benefit from a more socially just world; therefore, who better to champion the training of professionals globally in these areas?

As Small Island Developing States which are at great risk from climate change-whether it be loss of coastlines and beaches, infrastructural damage due to hurricanes and extreme weather, or loss of agricultural productivity due to unpredictable weather patterns, the paradigm from which our UWI Faculty can approach such issues is as authentic as it gets- one can only imagine the impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

What we know as the UN Development Goals today are not new in principle, but form the basis of the UN's several development campaigns since 1960. These campaigns started as efforts to reduce world hunger, but broadened in focus to economic development, illiteracy and disease.

The objectives of these campaigns, over many decades, have not been completely met, and some have attributed this to the lack of will of the developed countries. Whether this is so or not is a secondary issue for us in the developing world; our primary concern should be to support, in every way we can, the achievement of the current Sustainable Development Agenda, and its accompanying 17 Goals. This holds great promise for the potential and progress of the Caribbean region.

Therefore, by introducing the International School for Development Justice, the UWI has joined the battle, taken the bull by the horns, and is now fully engaging citizens of the Caribbean as architects of their own future.

If "Be the Change that you Want to See" was a university, it would be the University of the West Indies.

Development justice is transformative; and the Caribbean can only benefit from a reduction in inequalities of wealth, power, and resources between countries, between rich and poor, and between men and women. For the sake of our progeny, we must do all that we can to succeed in raising up a generation of leaders that collectively value human development over economic growth, and operate from the standpoint of social, ecological, gender, and economic justice. I wish the UWI International School of Development Justice God's speed.

Ladies and gentlemen, the pleasure has been mine to have had the honour to contribute these few words and thoughts at such a momentous occasion, and as I thank you for the privilege of your attention, I once again extend my deepest congratulations to the UWI, and leave us with these words:

There is a light that is rising from out of the West,

And proud bearers of that light are we,

So we follow those whose work has brought glory to the name of the
University of the West Indies;

Making a better world for you and for me.

May God bless us all.