

St. Augustine Campus Principal Professor Clement Sankat

As Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal of The UWI St. Augustine Campus, I take great pleasure in joining those who have gone before me in extending heartfelt congratulations to Professor Sir Hilary Beckles on his appointment as the 8th Vice-Chancellor of our beloved regional University of the West Indies.

This is truly a momentous occasion in our University's relatively short history, as we now hand over the reins of the stewardship of our institution to another distinguished Caribbean leader. This University has demonstrated its immense value as a contributor and repository to human development and intellectual capacity of our West Indian community for over 66 years. It is an institution driven by men of the ilk of Sir Hilary and his predecessors to achieve regional development and to shape our West Indian identity.

Our regional University shines in the world as a unique institution of Caribbean regionalism like no other. Sir Hilary, I want to immediately declare that as a colleague of long-standing and friend, I have the utmost confidence that you will bring to this space an aura of commitment, fairness and excellence that has been a trademark of all your past accomplishments and thus, our University's light will shine even brighter.

Distinguished guests - it is important to accept the premise of change. It is inevitable and fundamental to our existence. But more importantly, the changing of the guard lends itself as a natural catalyst to foster further growth, relevance and impact as we continue to evolve into an entity that strives to meet the daily expectations of the people of our region. The dynamics of our University welcomes change, as we are inseparable from the environment surrounding us, which itself is searching for workable solutions that can only be derived through exploring new options and possibilities. Change therefore must be embraced, adopted, incorporated and exploited so that we may derive in a complete and comprehensive manner, all the new experiences and benefits that a dynamic leader like Sir Hilary will bring.

Simply put, Sir Hilary's history of service to our regional University of the West Indies for **over 30 years**, both as an academic and administrator, has not only been remarkable, but symbolic of an exceptional leader! Providing dedication and versatility in service as Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the Cave Hill Campus, Chairman of the Board for Undergraduate Studies and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, reinforces the wealth of knowledge and experience that he brings to this position. His scholarly contribution to the field of Caribbean Social and Economic History is immeasurable and globally recognized! That Sir Hilary was the youngest in The UWI's history to be promoted to a personal professorship (at the age of 36), is further testimony to his academic prowess. His publication "Britain's Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide" (which we had the pleasure of launching at the St. Augustine Campus in 2013) is the first scholarly work that looks comprehensively at the issue of reparations for the Caribbean region and thus, is a very valuable contribution to the intellectual discourse on the history of our region that breaks new ground! Also not to be forgotten is his contribution to West Indies Cricket (a passion that we both share), with his book entitled "Development of West Indian Cricket", another variable that represents Caribbean integration, in which Sir Hilary analyses the ebb and flow of West Indian Cricket.

My dear friends – I am confident that Sir Hilary will continue to be instrumental in our University’s development and would lead through creativity to achieve the aspirations of our Caribbean people. At this time, possibly more than ever before, the Caribbean is desperately seeking new pathways to development, in this multipolar competitive world. The University of the West Indies cannot fail in this regard and I know that Sir Hilary has always championed a pathway to development anchored with a ‘human face’ as the slogan which he coined, *“one graduate per household”* aptly describes. This concept puts people at the centre of development; a position that the University must embrace.

I wish to share with you an excerpt of Sir Hilary’s contribution to a large audience gathered for the Forum on the Future of the Caribbean hosted by the St. Augustine Campus in collaboration with the UN System and Trinidad and Tobago’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Sir Hilary encouraged us all, and I quote *“that we must focus on education, research and the commercialization of our ideas...; and that we have to invest much more in the education of our young people....* He further stated that the concept of *“small states with 200,000 people can be greater than a region with 200 million people to be debunked, if we are to move forward in a globalized era”*. I firmly support and truly embrace this ideology of the Caribbean making a major leap in a globalized world. Vice-Chancellor, Sir Hilary, it must be our collective imperative as a community of scholars under your stewardship to make your words our reality! We can truly build a Caribbean university that provides leadership not only for us but for the world.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, in closing, I am truly proud to salute Sir Hilary as the 8th Vice-Chancellor of The University of the West Indies! On behalf of the students, staff, alumni and the benefactors of The UWI St. Augustine Campus and on my own behalf and that of my family, I extend once again, heartfelt congratulations to you! We stand ready to work together to continue building this great institution. I know your actions have always been driven by strong historical and philosophical underpinnings and hence we know that great things will come under your stewardship as our new Vice-Chancellor. I end with a quote that has resonated with me and is indeed applicable as you assume your new role. These words were spoken by Harry S. Truman, the 33rd President of the United States of America, and I quote,

“Men make history and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous skilful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better”

Sir Hilary – best wishes on a new journey for which you have been well prepared.