

07/06/11 PM

President;

SAINT LUCIA.

{ Don't forget to introduce your co-delegate ☺ Estelle George-Lebrun (SFSO -
Legal division MEAll) }

When we presented our review in January, we indicated that we welcomed the opportunity to ^{do so} because it gave us an opportunity to see how the world judges our efforts, at providing the conditions for the development of our citizens. We were pleased to receive some comments, suggestions and recommendations that we have since taken back with us, and determine how they fit into our development strategies, how they can improve our performance, and in what areas we can collaborate with others to enhance our own ability, to provide our citizenry with the best governance frameworks that will allow every one of them to accomplish their dreams, and realize their potentials, while making their own contribution to the development of the State. This last point has been the concern of successive governments of Saint Lucia.

President,

We are a young country, limited in natural resource, with a small population that nevertheless expects no less from its government than the guarantee of living in peace and security while ensuring that our nation prospers. This therefore requires the participation of, and acceptance by all the citizens in the priorities, policies and decision making process. Interaction, information sharing, and consultation are therefore necessary at all levels **for buy in**. That Saint Lucia, despite the many challenges resulting from the factors mentioned before, is categorized as a middle income country, and has been able to achieve, and in some cases surpass many of the MDG targets, attests to the willingness of both government and the people to ensure that gains are made on all fronts. Foremost of these, is the respect for the human rights of the citizenry and all who come to our shores, and the vigilance that must be maintained to ensure that shortcomings are corrected in an expeditious manner, in keeping with the wishes of the population, which is the measure of the stability of our democratic institutions. We strongly believe that democracy and the respect for human rights go hand in hand, or are the two sides of the same coin.

It is within that framework that we have undertaken to review the recommendations presented to us.

As members of this August body, and others will note from our report and responses, many of the recommendations fall within our own thinking and are already being addressed within existing legislation and institutions. Others are under consideration for decision making after consultation, and a review of our own capacity to implement. They have therefore been accepted as outlined. I say this because we want to ensure that what we say we will do, we can in fact do, since we take our commitments and obligations seriously. In that respect we welcome the offers by those who, conscious of our limitations and having been there themselves, offered to assist us in overcoming the challenges through improvement in our human resource capacity, policy development and implementation, and the sharing of their experiences with us.

President

While I will not repeat many of the points made in our presentation in January let me highlight a few key points: On Ratifications we have outlined in paragraph one, the five (5) Treaties or Conventions that we consider most pressing, given our limited human resource and their impact on our society. In addition, the optional protocols to some others, eg, CRC and CEDAW will be considered as priority. It is not that the others are not important. However, we can only go one step at a time, and therefore have to prioritize.

On legislative framework:

We wish to point out that from independence we have had a constitution that served us well, but that with all things, change must come, and we are in the process of a Constitutional Review that will enable adjustments based on the preferences of the governed. In addition, while Saint Lucia may not be party to certain international agreements, several provisions are made within our domestic legislation that incorporate provisions of these treaties into national law. For example, while Saint Lucia is not yet signatory to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, **the Counter-Trafficking Act** which incorporates many provisions of this Protocol was implemented into domestic legislation, and came into force in February of last year.

Strengthening of Human Rights Institutions:

Here we wish to point out that even when a particular institution does not exist, or has a different name it does not mean that the issues of concern are not addressed. In this regard, Saint Lucia intends to strengthen the capacity, and

scope of the office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman as a means of reinforcing effective avenues for redress of human rights concerns and grievances.

Marginalized youth:

This is a matter of growing concern to us as we recognize that the health and well being of the youth reflects upon the health of the nation. To give effect to existing policies, and the implementing of new policies and programmes, an increased allocation was announced in the Government Budget in April this year to deal with issues of youth. In addition, the government is partnering with NGOs, CBOs and Faith Based organizations to ensure that the needs of the youth are met in an adequate and timely manner.

Children:

We have taken steps to ensure that our children are born healthy, so we need to ensure that they continue to be afforded every protection to enable them to progressively develop, and not become marginalized. In so doing, ongoing legislative reforms are being pursued at the national level as well as within the framework of the OECS, to secure improved protections and standards of living for our children, who are recognized as being among the most vulnerable in our communities.

The Elderly

Of equal importance to the population and government is the caring of the elderly in our midst. They have made their contribution to society and now society needs to reward them. Hence a new home for the elderly has been constructed to accommodate the ever increasing aging population, as we seek to improve the quality of life, and health care in the State.

Torture, Violence and especially violence against women:

The government of Saint Lucia does not condone violence in any form against any persons or group of persons. The Constitution of Saint Lucia already protects all persons against such unlawful acts, and domestic legislation, through our criminal code, provide further measures of redress. It is expected that after the review, some of those measures may go further. In addition, the government is conscious of the need to address the root causes and sources of these acts and is putting in place measures to address not just the legal framework but also the

socio-economic factors that can help reduce or eliminate these acts. Human worth and dignity are our guiding principles, and so through education, civics, and programmes that help to instill respect for each other, the government is confident that concerns in these areas will be positively addressed, and bring about societal change. If attitudinal changes can be effected, this will bring about a change in every aspect of life: how we relate with each other, how the citizenry views the police, how the police interacts with other citizens, how public servants interact with those they serve, the teacher student relationship that improves learning and development, employer/employee relationships that foster productivity, family values, and respect for each other no matter what the standing in life, or on the totem pole.

Socio-economic aspects/Poverty.

The eradication of poverty remains a central pillar of government policy and programmes, as we are convinced that poverty is at the root cause of many of the ills of societies. The Government is committed to ensuring that programs aimed at providing services to the poor are continued and strengthened. Much of this is accomplished through agencies such as the Saint Lucia Social Development Fund which through diverse policy measures, seek to especially secure an improved quality of life for the socially or economically disadvantaged.

In conclusion, Saint Lucia would like to thank member states for their valuable comments and recommendations made. We assure you that every effort will be made to incorporate the recommendations accepted, utilizing all available resources.