

**SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE LAUNCH OF THE BANANA ACCOMPANYING
MEASURES FINANCING AGREEMENT FOR THE
COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA 9TH MAY 2013**

**Prime Minister, Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit,
Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Honourable Walter Matthew
Walter,**

**Mrs. Carleen ROBERTS ,
National Authorising Officer for the European Development Fund**

Permanent Secretaries, Chief Planners and Government Officials

Members of the media.

**Distinguished Participants and Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, and in
particular you the dynamic residents of La Plaine**

Good day ladies and gentlemen.

It is my pleasure to be here with you all today, to launch together with the Honourable Prime Minister the operational phase of the European Union's Banana Accompanying Measures support to the Commonwealth of Dominica, with a contribution of EC\$54 million (EUR 15.27 million). The Banana Accompanying Measures is one of the major EU programmes of assistance to Dominica which complements other EU grants such as the EC\$29 million contribution towards the Growth and Social Protection Strategy; the EC\$26 million West Coast Water Supply Project; the EC\$24 million towards reconstruction following tropical storm Ophelia; EC\$20 million towards the enhancement of rural livelihoods which included the development of the Waitukubuli National Trail; EC\$5 million for geothermal exploration; and a Technical Cooperation facility of EC\$2 million to support Non-State Actors.

These assistance programmes underpin the continued European Union commitment to strengthen and extend its partnership with the Government of Dominica as it seeks to deliver its development agenda through significant investments not only in rural development, but also in economic and social infrastructure as well as macroeconomic and sector management.

Dominica has had a formal relationship with the European Union since 1979 and the historical importance of grant support by the European Union to Dominica and other Caribbean countries needs to be highlighted. Indeed, in these undeniably difficult and stressful times of unemployment, social distress and economic re-engineering it is important to ensure that all types of public investments leverage significant multipliers.

The Banana Accompanying Measures process has been an intense prolific and transparent one with the formulation of a National Adaptation Strategy, Multi-Annual Support Strategy and Financing Agreement. The openness of the process should be lauded, in particular the development of a strategic implementation plan involving joint missions and planning sessions and constant reviews, thereby ensuring quality, diversity and equity for every party's contributions, and facilitating dialogue at each decision making level.

The aim of this banana support package is to assist Dominica in adjusting to the new trading arrangements resulting from the reduction of the import tariff on bananas.

The support package will take into account each country's specific situation and will focus on boosting the competitiveness of the banana sector, promoting economic diversification and addressing broader social, economic and environmental issues.

Let me make it clear that the Banana Accompanying Measures will be provided in addition to the traditional development aid from the European Development Fund. For emphasis, this means that Dominica will not loose out on other modes of EU grant funding that has been a part of Dominica EU relations. The support package also provides for better management of natural resources, environmental sustainability, increased preparedness as well as resilience to extreme weather conditions and climate change.

Historically, agriculture has been one of the mainstays of Dominica's economic and social fabric. Changing world trade regimes, particularly the erosion of preferences, brought formidable challenges to the country's agricultural sector, especially the banana industry.

Despite the increasing contribution of other important sectors of the economy during the last 20 years, the recent lessons from the global economic crisis and its impact on Caribbean island states highlight the need to give proper attention to agriculture and its potential to provide growth, employment and food security.

Although funds being provided as part of the Banana Accompanying Measures cannot provide all of the solutions to the agriculture sector and the rural development of the country, if used strategically, they can be instrumental in changing the way farmers do business and the way the sector contributes to wealth and job creation.

Specifically these funds are earmarked for the promotion of nutrient recycling, the prevention of soil erosion, protection of ground water resources, accommodation of biodiversity, the creation of an industry with more efficient logistics which plays a functional role in watershed management and will assist the country in adapting to climate change and extreme weather conditions. I seize this opportunity to acknowledge the completion of the EU Funded Caribbean Agro-Meteorological Initiative (CAMI) project, which provides relevant and timely weather and climate information to farmers to support their production choices. We hope that this project will operate in synergy with the initiatives of the Banana Accompanying Measures. (With this aim in mind I believe Mrs Honore from the Meteorological Service will kindly handover some of the outputs of this project to the Minister of Agriculture).

Let me close by saying that provision of this banana support package is proof that the EU understands the challenges faced by its development partners and will continue to be proactive in identifying their needs in these very trying economic times.

Hon. Prime Minister, Ministers, NAO, Permanent Secretaries, Ladies and Gentlemen from La Plaine and elsewhere,

Thank you for your attention, your partnership and warm hospitality.