



NEWS RELEASE

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website: www.gov.gd Phone: 473-440-7258 or 473-440-2255
Fax: 473-435-7285. Mobile: 473 405 5881

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PRIME MINISTER CALLS ON UNESCO TO SUPPORT CHANGES TO EDUCATION

ST. GEORGE'S, GRENADA, 28 OCTOBER, 2011_Grenada's Prime Minister, Hon. Tillman Thomas, has called on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to "deepen the partnership" with member states to transform education systems at all levels."

Speaking at the Leaders Forum at the 36th session of the General Conference of UNESCO in Paris, France, the Prime Minister challenged the meeting to develop an "ethical framework" for a sustainable world, involving the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality and socio-political sustainability.

Prime Minister Thomas, one of six leaders invited to address the 190 nation Conference, said that despite the effects of the global economic crisis on small island territories, the desire to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 has been recognized as one of the best ways to "lay the foundations for sustainable development."

"Moreover, this has had dire consequences for developing countries and in particular for Grenada's economy and for many Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Thus our march towards the achievement of our desired goals has been considerably slowed," the first Caribbean Prime Minister address the UNESCO Conference in more than 30 years, declared.

The Grenadian leader told the UNESCO Conference that the integration of a culture of peace, the principles of equality, freedom, justice and democracy, respect of all human rights, tolerance, reconciliation, solidarity and promotion of intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding into the education system, is essential for good governance, informed decisions and for democracy.

He added that education for sustainable development requires a special focus on climate change and disaster risk reduction and prevention. "This leads to a greater awareness and to new ways of thinking, new social and ethical attitudes and innovative responses to our most pressing contemporary challenges," he said.

For more information contact: PRESS SECRETARY - Richard Simon



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Mr Thomas called for greater acceleration and progress toward Education For All (EFA), lifelong learning, attaining quality education and developing skills for the world of work through curriculum reform and the further development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), including green jobs and higher education, to meet the demands of the 21st century.

He told the meeting that in an era of globalization, the world cannot “genuinely prosper” without developing a Strategy for African Prosperity and attending to the special needs of Least Developed and Small Islands Developing States, with special focus on youth and gender development.

“Advocating for gender equality also requires that specific attention be given to the needs and contributions of young males in our Caribbean societies, where a disproportionate number of males are confronted by under-achievement, poverty, violence and exclusion. It would be critical to empower them, to allow them to initiate social change and to be active participants in determining their own future,” Grenada’s Prime Minister said.

The Grenadian leader called for the UN agency to “intensify its action in favour of building knowledge based societies”, in which information, integration, and participation are key building blocks to help countries develop.

The Grenada Delegation includes Minister for Education, Franka Alexis-Bernardine, Ambassador Stephen Fletcher, Secretary General of Unesco/Grenada, Mr. Terry Moore, Mrs. Chafica Haddad of the Grenada/Unesco Paris Office.



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