

**Speech for Hon Cecil Mc Kie Minister of Tourism and Culture:
Delivered at the Accountability Workshop of the
ST. Vincent and the Grenadines chapter of the Caribbean Growth forum on
Wednesday April, 30th, 2014**

Members of the head table, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen:

First, I wish to offer sincerest apology for the absence of the Honourable Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves who is out of state at this time. You will recall that the Hon Prime Minister addressed the launch of the St. Vincent chapter of the Caribbean Growth Forum, in November 2012. At that time, the Prime Minister gave the full support of the Government to the Caribbean Growth Forum. He is unavoidably absent today.

The Caribbean Growth Forum as you know, seeks to identify policies and initiatives, which are aimed at inducing growth and creating jobs in the Caribbean through inclusive dialogue and knowledge exchange.

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is very pleased to continue its support of this Caribbean Growth Forum which as you have heard, and most of you already know, is an initiative led by the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank. It is further supported by United Kingdom and the Canadian Development Agency (CIDA).

Following the launch of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Chapter, three multi-stakeholders groups were established each with specific responsibilities of working on the thematic areas of: 1. Logistics and connectivity; 2. Investment climate and 3. Skills and productivity. These groups met regularly and identified the reforms necessary within their thematic area to promote growth within this country.

But the Caribbean Growth Forum is not about identifying what needs to be done. It is much more than that. It aims to identify the bottlenecks which prevent growth from taking place? What are the difficulties and the challenges to attaining the desirable levels of growth? This is why we are here today at this Accountability Workshop. We want at this Accountability workshop, not to apportion blame, but to take account of where we are, and help to iron out the kinks which inevitably arise and which stand in the way of progress, growth and development within our country.

I am sure that each one agrees that the three areas of focus, the three thematic areas, are vital for growth and development in this country. Indeed, all three: logistics and connectivity; investment and skills and productivity are inextricably linked to the tourism sector, which has been identified as a key area for growth in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

It is difficult to think of making serious advances in tourism if the enabling environment for ICT development is lagging behind. For example, an E-commerce

enabled environment impacts tourism in a number of ways, including allowing local businesses access to global markets and also by providing new opportunities for these businesses to showcase their tourism product, in creative ways. It must be noted too that an enabled e-commerce environment also helps with improving the internal efficiency of the local companies.

I have illustrated from the logistics and interconnectivity thematic area, and shown the ways in which it directly impacts the tourism sector. The other two thematic areas are also integrally linked to the advancement, growth and development of the tourism sector. Thus, it should come as no surprise to you, that the outcome of this Accountability Workshop is particularly important to us in the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and to the government. We want to know what is working and what is not. Where there are bottlenecks and delays, let us point these out. It is only when we take stock of where we are, that we can truly learn and make changes which will cause us to improve and to reach the targets that we have set.

So the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is very pleased to work along with all of our partners in this exercise. The benefits to be derived from this workshop will redound to the benefit of all of us who are interested in building a better, stronger, St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Thank you ladies and gentlemen, and I look forward to a productive day.