



RESS SECRETARY
Prime Minister's Office
6th Floor, Ministerial Complex
Botanical Gardens, St. George, Grenada
Email: pmpressesec@pmo.gov.gd
Email: pmpressesecretary@gmail.com
Phone: 473-440-2255 ext 22910
Mobile: 473-534-2003

PRESS RELEASE

PRIME MINISTER CHAIRS FIRST MEETING OF TASK FORCE AS GOV'T EXPLORES REACTIVATION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, POST COVID-19

April 22, 2020 – Prime Minister and Chairman of Cabinet, Dr. the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell, says he is extremely satisfied with the outcome of the first meeting of the task force mandated to examine ways to reactivate economic activity in Grenada, post COVID-19.

Dr. Mitchell chaired the meeting on Wednesday which brought together representatives of multiple sectors and associations, along with Government officials. In his opening remarks to attendees, Dr. Mitchell said the unprecedented global crisis necessitates collective action to determine the way forward.

The Prime Minister commended participants for their commitment to serve. He said, "I must acknowledge the members of the task force for their ready willingness to be part of the process to chart the way forward. At very short notice, they put aside personal and/or business related responsibilities to participate in the meeting and provide quality suggestions on the way forward. I look forward to our working together and coming up with a plan that will foster recovery and growth in the local economy."

Dr. Mitchell acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic has created major economic disruption and he expects the local economy to contract significantly. The actual extent of this impact, he said, is yet to be determined as data is still being gathered.

However, Dr. Mitchell, who is also the Minister of Finance is optimistic that with a gradual return to economic activity across all sectors, there will be some recovery and growth in 2021.

In an interview at the conclusion of the meeting, Dr. Mitchell said, "COVID-19 has changed the whole landscape of development. It has affected the lives of all citizens. The harsh reality is that we have to come to terms with this new dispensation and work together to build our country in the context of COVID-19, because the disease is not going to go away overnight."

Elaborating on the role of the task force, Dr. Mitchell said, "The task force will help to formulate and build on ideas and suggestions to stimulate economic recovery. Ideally, we must have all stakeholders on board to do this efficiently and effectively. In the midst of this pandemic and its widespread impact, many opportunities will be created and we must be prepared to use these to propel Grenada's development."

One of the key suggestions coming out of Wednesday's meeting is the creation of sub-committees that are assigned responsibility for each of the productive sectors. These have been identified as tourism, construction, services (inclusive of education and financial services), business, agriculture and fisheries, wholesale and retail and e-commerce. The composition of the various sub-committees and the respective terms of reference will be finalised as one of the priority areas for action emanating from the meeting.

Dr. Mitchell noted that with agriculture and fisheries identified as one of the productive sectors, a concerted effort will be made to improve Grenada's food security as part of the way forward. He said, "Government has already signaled its intention to invest more resources into supporting the agriculture sector, through initiatives such as the Farm Labour Programme and Youth in Agriculture. We always say, we must eat what we grow and grow what we eat; this becomes even more relevant now. The agriculture sector will be a prime area for serious new thinking going forward."

According to the Prime Minister, a key takeaway from the impact of the pandemic is that it cannot be business as usual. He said, "Government, the business sector and the trade union movement must come to terms with the new dispensation and work together to create more jobs, to create better jobs and more opportunities in the new environment we face."

The general composition of the task force includes representation from Government, the business sector, farming community, construction, manufacturing and hotels, as well as the Grenada Chamber of Industry and Commerce; the Grenada Trades' Union Council; the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association; Grenada Tourism Authority; Grenada Bankers Association and St. George's University.

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