



Address Delivered by HRH, The Prince of Wales at the
Official Reception on Tuesday, March 19, 2019
at Government House, Barbados

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives my wife and myself enormous pleasure to be here with all of you this evening. I have a feeling that the last time I was in Barbados was, well maybe I was here a little bit after that, but forty-six years ago, and people have told me all sorts of things I can't remember. And that was one time, when I was serving in the Royal Navy and I think I was then on the then West Indies Station for seven months. And I will never forget the visit here, and the other ones I've had and I can only assure you that I have had

nothing but the fondest memories of this remarkable island.

And we have been most touched by the kind welcome you have given us today and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you, Your Excellency, for your very special hospitality, and for hosting this marvellous reception here at Government House.

Bajan hospitality is world famous, of course, which is one reason why an astonishing one million international visitors arrive on these shores each year... and I can only hope that most of them enjoy themselves rather more than the England Cricket team did in January!

For our part, being back in Barbados we have been reminded of just how beautiful your Island is, and even more strikingly, of the strength and vibrancy of your society. We have heard such marvellous accounts of the tremendous difference that is being made here by volunteers in their communities: such as Corey

Lane who started the Nature Fun Ranch for disadvantaged youth, or Kemar Saffrey, founder of the Barbados Homeless and Vagrants NGO, both of whom have received Commonwealth Points of Light awards; or Shamelle Rice, who founded Jabez House for female sex workers, and was chosen as a Queen's Young Leader. I was very glad to find that nearly all of them are here this evening.

Within the region, and globally, Barbados is offering vital leadership on some of the most pressing issues of our time, particularly on climate change and other challenges facing Small Island States such as the vital importance of protecting our oceans.

We have, at last, some might say somewhat belatedly, started to understand just how critical the Ocean's health is to our survival but also, ladies and gentlemen, how vulnerable it is to climate change and over-exploitation. As the IPCC report so graphically

stated late last year, even 1.5 degrees centigrade of warming will pose catastrophic threats to the Ocean's ecosystems, particularly it's coral reefs. As we seem set to achieve at least three degrees warming by the end of the Century, we have our work cut out! I was, therefore, delighted to learn that the Government of Barbados has made significant strides in planning for a Marine Protected Area around the island which, when enacted, will do much to protect the pristine coastline upon which so much of your economy depends. Not only would such an area boost economic growth and increase livelihood of local communities, it will offer a compelling example for others to follow and be an inspiration to other parts of the commonwealth.

Barbados also, if I may say so Ladies and Gentlemen, offers an inspirational example through the remarkable number of women in positions of national leadership: not only the Governor-General and the Prime Minister, but also the Leader of the other main

political party, as well as the Director of Public Prosecutions and a large number of Permanent Secretaries, Ambassadors and High Commissioners.

And then, of course, there is arguably the most famous living Bajan of all: from her childhood in Bridgetown, Rihanna has gone on to be one of the most influential recording artists of her generation and a global style icon – or so my son, Harry, tells me, anyway!

The influence and leadership of Barbados is felt particularly keenly in the Commonwealth, which binds together 2.4 billion of us, across fifty-three countries on six continents, united by our shared experience and shared values. As we celebrate the Commonwealth's seventieth birthday this year, it seems to me that our Commonwealth family remains as vital today as it has ever been – bringing us together to address urgent global challenges, such as climate change, and rapid urbanization and

youth unemployment, with sixty percent of the population of the Commonwealth being under thirty years old.

Helping young people achieve their potential is something about which I have minded greatly for many years. And as some of you may know, I started the Prince's Trust in the U.K. forty-three years ago to help young people who may have experienced the most challenging circumstances and difficulties in their lives, by giving them the skills, the self-confidence and the self-esteem to achieve their potential, either by equipping them for employment or by empowering them to start their own businesses. In the UK, this has led to very nearly 1,000,000 young people having their lives transformed and nearly 90,000 businesses created. More recently, ladies and gentlemen we have taken the experience of my Trust to a growing number of places around the world through Prince's Trust International, offering that classic hand up rather than a hand out. There is much to do throughout the Commonwealth to help young people acquire the necessary skills

to start their own enterprises – particularly those that provide innovative solutions to environmental issues.

So it has given me particular pride today to be able to see for myself some of the marvellous work that Prince's Trust International is doing in Barbados, through the programmes it has been running for the past few years in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Community Empowerment and the Barbados Police Force. Our programmes have so far helped over a hundred young people in Barbados, like nineteen year old Shakola Thomas who in common with many young people, was struggling to find employment. Shakola enrolled in my Prince's Trust Team Programme which, she says, helped to build her self-confidence and self-esteem. My Trust secured for Shakola a work placement in the hospitality industry and she has now set up her own successful business making and decorating cakes.

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Prince's Trust International has set itself the goal of working with two thousand young people like Shakola in Barbados over the next five years, with the further aim of establishing Barbados as a hub from which to expand its work across the Caribbean. I can only say how tremendously grateful I am to the Barbados authorities for the invaluable collaboration we have enjoyed with them, as well as to all those generous supporters who have made this work possible. And I hope many more of you will have the opportunity to see the work of my Trust and, perhaps, dare I say it, to become involved yourselves.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It simply remains for me to thank you again for making us so wonderfully welcome in Barbados this week, and for everything that each of you does to contribute to the strength of society in Barbadian, and to her place in the world. You have much to be proud of – and, for my part, I can only say how much pride I take

in the close bond between my own family and the people of this very special Island.

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen.

(ENDS)