



# **Throne Speech**

**2020**

Delivered by

**His Excellency**

**Sir S. W. Tapley Seaton G.C.M.G., C.V.O., Q.C., J.P., L.L.D.**

Governor General

**“ROADMAP TO A STRONGER, SAFER FUTURE”**

## **Ceremonial Opening of Parliament**

Royal Ballroom

St. Kitts Marriott Resort<sup>1</sup>

Frigate Bay, St. Kitts

Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020

10:00 a.m.

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<sup>1</sup> Venue irregularity due to inadequacy of the Parliamentary Chambers to house the event, in order to maintain strict compliance with COVID-19 protocols

**THRONE SPEECH OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> TERM OF THE**  
**TEAM UNITY GOVERNMENT**

***Wednesday, July 8, 2020***

**Royal Ballroom, St. Kitts Marriott Resort, Frigate Bay, St. Kitts**

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***Mr. Speaker and other Honourable Members of the National Assembly:***

*Today, my Team Unity Government stands at the threshold of a new, historic era that is destined to usher into our Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis a period of rebirth, resilience, renewal and recommitment designed to give our people a Stronger, Safer Future which they so deserve. At this particular moment in World history when every single continent, nation, city state, town and village has had to contend with the cataclysmic shift in terms of their collective way of life, the decimation of economies, the considerable loss of lives and the countless infections brought about by the novel coronavirus - now dubbed the COVID-19 pandemic - our tiny Federation has stood tall in weathering the storms virtually unscathed. For this, we give The Almighty all the glory and honour for bringing us this far by faith and favour.*

*Our very own election campaigning, the conduct of our General Election on June 5, 2020, and the inauguration of the new Government were done under rather unusual conditions in compliance of COVID-19 rules and protocols. Today's opening of the new Parliamentary Session demonstrates adherence to our ongoing COVID-19 protocols, given the need to observe proper social distancing - which the confines of our Parliamentary Chambers cannot accommodate. Hence, the reason we are meeting here at the St. Kitts Marriott Resort. We sincerely apologise to the public, family, friends, well-wishers, dignitaries and other specially invited guests for any inconvenience that this untraditional venue change may have caused.*

*The results of the June 5, 2020 General election reflect that out of the eleven (11) Electoral Districts, Team Unity received the majority, having increased its number of Representatives in the last Parliament from seven (7) to nine (9) seats. On Sunday, the June 7, 2020, I invited Dr the Hon Timothy Harris, who in my own deliberate judgment had the support of the majority of Representatives, to be the Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis and to form my Government, the Executive which I oversee.*

*Today, as we start the National Assembly, we swear in the Representatives and Senators who will sit in the Parliament to make the laws which will govern our people. There will be twelve (12) members on the Government Benches: nine (9) elected Representatives and three (3) nominated Senators; and three (3) members on the Opposition Benches: two (2) elected Representatives and one (1) nominated Senator.*

*As we stand at the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> term of the Team Unity Government, it is necessary to remind our citizens and residents of St. Kitts and Nevis of the vision, ethos and over-arching aim of the Team Unity movement which was launched on September 26, 2013, following the agreement of the People's Action Movement (PAM), The Concerned Citizens Movement (CCM) and the People's Labour Party (PLP) to set aside party politics and form a coalition. I would have undertaken a similar exercise in the Throne Speech I would have delivered as then Governor General's Deputy on Thursday, May 14, 2015. Now that Team Unity has retained control of the Government following the resounding victory at the polls – with an even stronger mandate by winning nine of the 11 seats – it is imperative for all to know and to understand that the Government had not, and will not, deviate from its intended plan for national development where the gains are shared by all regardless of colour, creed, gender, ethnicity, race, political opinion or socio-economic status. By holding fast to our united mission we will truly ensure that our Federation remains a preferred jurisdiction in which to live, work, do business and engage in leisure activities. Adherence to this core mandate will also guarantee that the principles and practices of democracy and good governance remain intact and respected.*

**Mr. Speaker:**

*In 2020, my Government is even more committed than we were in 2015 in terms of delivering on the joint vision of “Prosperity for All”, where the impact of our growth and development is positively felt by even the most vulnerable among us. Our approach over the next five years, in constructing a stronger and safer future, is therefore intended to build on the prosperity foundation that my Government would have already started to put in place.*

*The COVID-19 pandemic will not stop the train of development, given our commitment to resilience and adaptability in weathering and adjusting to whatever the new normal state of being calls for. We recognise it would not be “business as usual”. We also recognise that this moment in time – more than ever before – is a period that calls for innovation, creativity and resilience as we set about the task of re-opening our economy and our borders in a careful and measured manner. To do otherwise would be a foolish undertaking that threatens the achievements we would have already made in the socio-economic, cultural and political transformation of our Country. My Government views our people’s needs, our health and our wellness as Priority #1, and we will not compromise public health on the altar of economic expedience.*

**Mr. Speaker:**

*My Government intends to maintain a people-centred approach to governance. Our citizens deserve to take up space in every area of human endeavour, whether it be through education, skills development, good jobs, public service, entrepreneurship and attraction of investments to our Federation be they of local, foreign or joint venture origin.*

**Mr. Speaker:**

*We were able to make significant strides in delivering this people-centric agenda by a number of noteworthy achievements which cannot all be documented here. Yet, there are several which are worthy of recall, as they have now put us on a strong footing to further advance our Nation in the next five years. These include:*

- ❖ Removal of Value Added Tax (VAT) from the cost of food, medicine, funeral expenses and educational supplies;*
- ❖ Full repayment of the \$117 million debt due to the International Monetary Fund (IMF); this major feat which, together with prudent financial administration over the past five years, has enabled us to roll out a historic \$120 million economic stimulus package which is unmatched by most Caricom jurisdictions;*
- ❖ Introduction of enhanced health services such as chemotherapy-based oncology treatment, mental health and related occupational therapy;*
- ❖ Development of the CBI funded Hurricane Roof Repair Programme, from which over 3,000 households benefitted;*
- ❖ Construction and reconstruction of health infrastructure such as the new Sylvia Garnette Primary Care Health Centre in Tabernacle, the renovation of Mary Charles Hospital and re-introduction of dental services there, and repairs and renovations to other health centres;*
- ❖ Infrastructure improvements such as the resurfacing of the island main road with drainage and sidewalk construction, the construction of the 2<sup>nd</sup> cruise ship pier, the Old Road rehabilitation project, the construction of the East Bus Terminal and Basseterre Ferry Terminal, and the soon to be completed West Bus Terminal;*
- ❖ Advancement in tourism and the allied services sector, including the attainment of Marquee Port status as a result of bringing in one million cruise passengers in a single year;*

- ❖ *Resuscitation and rebranding of the delicate Citizenship by Investment Programme (CBI) into a platinum brand, given its pride of place as the oldest citizenship programme in the world – for which we give credit to our Nation’s only living National Hero, Dr the Right Honourable and Right Excellent Kennedy Alphonse Simmonds, our country’s first Prime Minister;*
- ❖ *Development of award-winning Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) infrastructure and commencement of the digital transformation process;*
- ❖ *Commencement of the process towards re-purchasing lands lost in the infamous Land-for-Debt Swap of the previous regime: thus far some 400 acres have been bought back for the people of our Country;*
- ❖ *Investments that are now bearing much fruit in terms of law enforcement and national security: the Peace Initiative/ Alternative Lifestyle Programme is a success story that has practically nullified the murder rate in the Nation while giving some of our young men a second chance to live lives of purpose outside of the gang culture;*
- ❖ *Attainment of the coveted achievement of Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and Congenital Syphilis (EMTCT); and*
- ❖ *Stellar management and leadership in terms of the first six months of the COVID-19 Pandemic, where there have been 15 recovered cases, one (1) active case, virtually no hospitalizations, and no deaths.*

**Mr Speaker:**

*Delivery of this Throne Speech would not be complete if I did not turn my attention to the plans and programmes which my Government intends to deliver on, in the next five years. These initiatives have been clearly laid out in our 2<sup>nd</sup> Team Unity Manifesto: “**Stronger, Safer Future**”. This is the roadmap which my Government intends to follow, in order to keep St. Kitts and Nevis headed in the right direction. We can only do this as a team, with a united front, for the good of all people of our beloved Nation. We can only do this*

*with a spirit of patriotism, a genuine love for our land, and a commitment to put the best interests of our people ahead of personal gain or ambition.*

***But – Just how do we deliver on that solemn promise of a Stronger, Safer Future?  
What exactly does this future demand?***

***Mr Speaker:***

*My Government has decided to tackle this new roadmap using six pledges, comprised as follows:*

***1<sup>st</sup> Pledge - Continuing to Build out a Diversified and Resilient Economy***

*Even before the Start of the COVID-19 pandemic it was very clear to My Government that we needed to remain steadfast to the task of building out an economy that was relatively tough enough to withstand the external shocks which can result from catastrophes such as Category 5 Hurricanes and other major weather phenomena, as well as epidemics and pandemics. It is also an imperative of my Government that we reduce our Country's heavy dependence on the CBI programme which – as is the case with tourism and the allied services sectors – is a fragile and fickle industry in which more and more jurisdictions continue to invest and compete against small states such as ours.*

*COVID-19 is teaching all countries the imperative of economic diversification and investment in new and emerging drivers while strengthening traditional sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, the digital economy, and financial services. As such, in this new term my Government will set out to:*

- *Continue to build out the digital economy needed to power investment and diversification in all sectors of the economy; this will be facilitated by investment partnerships to advance research and development in the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) industry; focus will also be given to strengthening the Nation's cyber security infrastructure;*
- *Actively attract and recruit high end manufacturing operators to the Federation, while creating new jobs for our labour force;*
- *Facilitate new trade agreements with emerging markets such as India, Brazil and South Africa, in order to promote exports and attract new investments from these jurisdictions;*
- *Pursue the development of a small business rescue fund, in order to assist businesses with resilience and recovery in the face of a disaster that interrupts business/economic activity in the country.*
- *Make more lands available for agricultural production, some of which have been earmarked to come from acreage already redeemed from the Land-for-Debt Swap;*
- *Aggressively promote and facilitate local investment in agriculture and related technology in order to boost food security, agro and meat processing, reduce our food import bills, export produce to neighbouring islands and conserve foreign currency reserves;*
- *Stimulate further economic activity in the city, urban, township and rural paths; and activities in appropriate beach locations will be developed; and*
- *Create an additional 500 new jobs in tourism, for which our people will be trained through the establishment of a state-of-the-art Tourism and Hospitality School of Excellence.*



## **2<sup>nd</sup> Pledge - Providing More Opportunities to Improve the Quality of Life of Our People**

*In my Government's first term, much was achieved in order to improve the standard and quality of life for the people of St. Kitts and Nevis. This has included comprehensive social safety net programmes – particularly the Poverty Alleviation Programme – and skills development initiatives. Equally, attention has been paid to improvement in the housing stock in the Country and family-centred programming. As such, in this new term the public can expect my Government to embark upon the following:*

- *Further improve the housing stock in the Country through construction of condominiums on East and West Streets in Newtown, for example;*
- *Continue construction of decent, low income housing throughout St. Kitts and Nevis;*
- *Create an additional 2,000 jobs in order for families to be more financially secure;*
- *Improve social services delivery to vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, physically and mentally challenged individuals;*
- *Improve opportunities for young people to develop their talents in culture and the performing arts; creation of the new Ministry of Arts, Entertainment and related Entrepreneurship will underpin this development among our young people;*
- *Complete the process of regularizing the status of employees in the Skills Training and Empowerment Programme (STEP) who are now being formally received in the public service; this will greatly enhance their standard of living;*
- *Construct a multi-purposed complex to address the talent formation needs of our young people in various sporting disciplines; development of a national sporting policy will enhance this development;*
- *Construct a national theatre for the performing arts;*
- *Earmark 2,000 house lots for low, medium and high-end residential developments;*  
*and*
- *Buy back more of the land that was lost in the unfortunate Land-for-Debt Swap.*

**Mr Speaker:**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Pledge - Protecting Our People and Our Borders**

*My Government has the greatest respect for the maintenance of law and order within our tiny jurisdiction. Equally, my Government is committed to the protection of our people in times of emergency and disaster, with the aim of saving lives and livelihoods. As a result of this, over the next five years one can expect that our Team Unity Government will:*

- *Enhance Community Policing in order for citizens and residents to develop a sense of responsibility and partnership with the police in securing local neighbourhoods;*
- *Bolster the Royal St Christopher and Nevis Police Force by creating opportunities for development of specialist capabilities, training both technical and academic, and also upward mobility in the Police Force;*
- *Construct a new facility for Her Majesty's Prison, as part of an ongoing process towards rehabilitation, reintegration and reorientation of offenders;*
- *Continue the build-out of the national security infrastructure;*
- *Provide legislative support to strengthen the operational mandate of NEMA, the agency would have performed at first class level for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, via its leadership of the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC);*
- *Facilitate improved service delivery among officers assigned to the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Customs and Immigration Departments;*
- *Provide improved facilities for the Coast Guards and the Coast Guard Base; and*
- *Establish a St. Kitts and Nevis Identity and Citizenship Registration Solution.*

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Pledge - Enhancing Public Services and Infrastructure**

##### **Mr Speaker:**

*It goes without saying that if a Nation cannot properly invest in the health, education, social and community services to its people, then the people of that Nation will be denied the best opportunity to develop and to thrive, and to become their best selves. As a result, my Government has heavily invested in these community services, with the firm resolve to continue doing all in our power to meet the needs of the public through the provision of improved public services and infrastructure. To do this, Team Unity will:*

- *Continue the build-out of the cardiac catheterization laboratory within the institution-based health service sector – in order to address the high incidence of heart disease among our people; catheterizations prevent the likelihood of blood clots that create heart attacks and thereby save lives; given the high incidence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) among our people, this laboratory service a major development;*
- *Commence the construction of a new general hospital in West Basseterre;*
- *Construct the state-of-the-art Basseterre High School in East Basseterre;*
- *Construct a new health centre in St. Peter's;*
- *Renovate and repair the property at Fortlands, Basseterre earmarked as the new home of the Spectrum Centre, in order to treat our Nation's children and young adults who have been diagnosed with autism;*
- *Finalise build-out of the National Health Insurance (NHI) in order to provide medical coverage to all, regardless of socio-economic status;*
- *Establish a graduate studies fund through the Social Security Board; this will assist nationals who wish to pursue graduate studies in priority areas determined by Government;*
- *Construct a National Training Institute (NTI);*

- *Assist persons with disabilities to live their lives with dignity and, in so doing, participate more fully in the development of the Country.*
- *Undertake coastal protection and revetment projects at Fortlands, Irishtown Bay Road, New Guinea, Frigate Bay and Black Rocks;*
- *Continue pursuit of the feasibility, design and build phases of a bridge to connect St. Kitts and Nevis; and*
- *Construct by-pass roads connecting areas such as Sandy Point, Cayon, Ottleys and Lodge Villages, and Challengers/Half Way Tree.*

### **5<sup>th</sup> Pledge - Pursuing a Greener, More Sustainable Future**

#### **Mr Speaker:**

*Any future development plan for St. Kitts and Nevis cannot be successfully achieved without due regard and care being taken for and on behalf of the environment and our planet in general. The greening of St. Kitts and Nevis is therefore of paramount importance, even as we build out new infrastructure that will help to:*

- *Continue to explore development of geothermal energy, as well as power from wind and the sun, to fuel domestic, industrial and commercial endeavours;*
- *Develop the Royal Basseterre Valley National Park;*
- *Enforce regulations and laws regarding prohibition of sand mining from ghauts and beaches;*
- *Implement proper management of Protected areas; and build capacity of forest rangers;*
- *Pursue soil conservation policies and programmes to safeguard our natural resources, prevent construction too close to ghauts and rivers, and install buffer zones along the banks of rivers and ghauts – and along coastlines and wetlands via use of vegetation and engineered solutions.*

- *Construct a 16 megawatt solar farm to provide our people with access to affordable electricity; this facilitates the hotel and manufacturing sectors too, as operational costs will be considerably reduced.*
- *Implement a phased approach re: the ban on single-use plastics; and introduce an introductory duty-free concession on the importation of alternatives to single-use plastics;*
- *Enforce The Litter Abatement Act;*
- *Explore and encourage business opportunities in waste-to energy options and also recycling;*
- *Ensure full functionality re: the St. Kitts and Nevis Marine Management Area (SKNMMA) by 2021, inclusive of completed management plans and related regulations;*
- *Facilitate the development and economic diversification in the blue economy via investment in aqua-culture, development of a High Seas Fisheries Unit, and provision of training and technical assistance to fishers and marine resource officers, etc.*
- *Incorporate climate resilience in every area of economic development, particularly those zones with heavy impact on our natural resources;*
- *Develop adaptation strategies for the agricultural sector and the marine and costal environments; and*
- *Amend building codes to include residential and commercial water harvesting and the construction of cisterns.*

***6<sup>th</sup> Pledge - Maintaining Our Commitment to Our Good Governance Agenda at Every Level***

*In 2015, my Government would have campaigned on a Good Governance Agenda that had as its fulcrum the preservation of our democracy that had been steadily eroded by the previous regime. In 2020 and beyond, this is an even more focused commitment for*

*my Government's 2<sup>nd</sup> term in office. As a result, the following are some of the goals that will be pursued:*

- *Constitutional reform that is inclusive of electoral reform – inclusive of a mandated residency requirement for voter eligibility; this will be the subject of national consultation in order to arrive at a consensus position;*
- *Enact legislation limiting the tenure of the Prime Minister to two consecutive terms;*
- *Careful review of constituency boundaries, production of a new boundaries report and parliamentary approval of revised boundaries that are in line with demographic shifts in the local population – rather than being contrived through political expedience;*
- *Review of Public Procurement legislation that provides a fair chance for the private sector to bid on, and supply goods and services to the public sector;*
- *Review Constitution and laws to ensure a better governance arrangement in and between the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis and the Nevis Island Administration (NIA);*
- *Establish a Tenders Board that builds in transparency and scrutiny with regards to the award of major Government contracts, etc.*
- *Complete Operationalisation of the Integrity in Public Life Act (2013) for parliamentarians and senior government officials;*

**Mr. Speaker:**

*This Address summarizes our Team Unity's Government's approach to governance, growth and development over the next five years. It is reflective of the attainment of a future that is safe, sustainable and resilient as we set about the business of rebuilding our economic landscape even while COVID-19 continues to be clear and present danger. Yet, ours is a collective vision for national development in a St. Christopher and Nevis*

*where no one should be left behind – and joint effort and collaboration would be clear imperatives.*

*St. Christopher and Nevis is a Nation that is on the move, and our Government's greatest wish is that all will be onboard the train of upward advancement for now and for generations yet unborn. We endeavour to go about the business of nation-building undaunted by the threats, shocks, global recession, and the buckling presently being witnessed by major world economies. All we have is ourselves, our people, our dreams and aspirations for the development of our tiny Country which we are all proud to call home. Using the thrust provided by the overwhelming mandate which my Government was given at the polls on June 5, 2020, our Government intends to do everything possible to hold fast to the gains we have made while carefully exploring and investing in new initiatives and economic drivers to fuel the plans and programmes needed to consistently improve the standard and quality of life of our people. Even as we do this, we endeavour to keep our Nation safe, healthy, well-skilled and buttressed by the resources we do have – those that are natural, human and financial. We do not have the luxury of wastage. Neither do we live in a world where small island developing states such as ours can assume that major global players will excuse our smallness and provide us with hand-outs, preferred market access or lower expectations in terms of compliance to world trade standards. We need all of our people to achieve all that we can, for the good of all of our citizens.*

**Mr. Speaker and other Honourable Members of the National Assembly:**

*Throughout the five years of this Administration more will be unveiled in this Honourable House as to the legislative calendar which my Government will put forward. Our Government is fully committed to these measures. We look forward to robust debate in this House. We anticipate meaningful consultation and the building of consensus when necessary, as we pass laws and regulations to improve our Country.*

*I pray for God's continued providence, protection and blessing upon our Federation and our people. I beseech Him for wisdom in everything that is done in this House on behalf of the people of St. Christopher and Nevis.*