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SVG ON THE MOVE WITH INCLUSIVE PROSPERITY

SVG ON THE MOVE

Since the dawn of the 21st century, SVG has been on the move with inclusive prosperity and sustainable development despite the limitations of size and material resources, the existential threat of climate change, the vulnerabilities to external shocks, the rapid diminution, to the point of extinction, of the market preferences for our bananas in the United Kingdom market, the challenges from the highly skewed and unfavourable global economy, and the adverse knock-on effects of mounting global turmoil. Our accomplishments, in this harsh context, have been phenomenal; indeed, amazing. The paradigm shift in building a modern, competitive, many-sided post-colonial economy is succeeding.

The resilience of our people and the genius resident in them, in tandem with exceptional leadership of the ULP government in pursuit of people-centred visionary policies and programmes have combined to deliver stunningly uplifting outcomes, despite silly opposition dissonances and anti-social activity by a tiny minority of the population. In every material respect, our country and its people have made extraordinary progress. Our people are far better off today than in 2001; and the prospects for further advancement are unfolding before our very eyes.

THE FACTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

The raw data, in summary form, are as follows:

1. In December 2000, our country's nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) — the aggregate value of all the goods and services produced in a year — stood at under EC \$800 million; in December 2024, the GDP was \$3.2 billion or some four times that of the year 2000.
2. The annual GDP per head of population at the end of 2000 was under EC\$8,000; in 2024, the comparable number was some \$30,000.
3. Unemployment in 2000 was 21 percent of the labour force; today that statistic hovers below 10 percent.
4. Poverty in the year 2000 stood at 37 percent of the population and indigence ("dirt poor" poverty) was a whopping 26 percent of the population. The comparable respective numbers today are less than 20 percent (general poverty) and indigence (under 5 percent).

Undernourishment in 2000 was 22 percent; today it is under 5 percent of the population.

5. In 2000, public assistance was EC\$50 monthly; today it is \$300.
6. In 2000, the elderly fended for themselves; today there is the Home-Help-For-the-Elderly.
7. In 2000 there were some 28,000 households; today there are over 46,000 households; the Housing Revolution has succeeded massively. The quality of the houses is far superior than in the year 2000.
8. Pipe-borne water was available to less than 70 percent of the 28,000 houses in 2000; today, there is water connection to 98 percent of the 46,000 homes. Similar numbers exist for electricity.
9. In 2000, almost half of the houses had pit toilets; today, almost every house has a flush-toilet – water closet.
10. In 2000, there were less than 8,000 vehicles on the road; today, there are some 34,000 vehicles.
11. In Education the relevant statistics are: In 2000, only four out of every ten 12-year olds were at secondary school; from 2005 onwards, all 12-year-olds are at secondary schools. In 2000, only 15 percent of the children 3 years-to-under 5 years were at Pre-School; today over 85 percent are at Pre—School (Early Childhood Education). In 2000, illiteracy stood at some 20 percent of the population; today the literacy rate is in excess of 98 percent. In 2000, there were some 500 students at the four divisions of what is now the SVG Community College; today there are over 2,600 students at the Community College. In 2000 there were only 4 national scholarships, no national exhibitions, and no bursaries; in 2024, 104 national scholarships, national exhibitions, and bursaries were awarded. In 2000 there were no tuition scholarships for university; in 2024, over 2,000 such tuition scholarships were granted. In 2000, only four teachers were university graduates in primary schools, but they were not paid as such; today, over half of the primary school teachers are university graduates and are paid as such either through appointment or graduate allowances. In the year 2000, there were roughly 20 students at university; today there are over 2,500 students pursuing university education, almost all of whom are being supported by the government. In the year 2000, there was no student loan programme for economically-disadvantaged students; since 2002, such a programme has existed and has supported, in the aggregate over 2,000 students in the sum of over

EC\$100 million; and the government guarantees the payment of the student loans in event of default. The Education Revolution is working magnificently.

12. In Health the progress has been phenomenal on all the indicators. Far more doctors, nurses, and other health personnel are employed today than in 2000; and far more have been trained, almost entirely at government's expense; significant decentralization of the delivery of health services has taken place; more clinics have been built; more rural hospitals have been built; three polyclinics (Stubbs, Mespo, Buccament) have been built — none existed before; the Modern Medical and Diagnostic Complex, well-equipped and well-staff was built at Georgetown; the Arnos Vale Acute Care Hospital is under construction; the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital has been significantly refurbished and better equipped than ever before; all the relevant health indicators have advanced immeasurably; recurrent expenditure on health has jumped to over EC \$100 million annually, in excess of three times the expenditure in 2000. People are living longer and healthier despite illnesses relating to personal behaviour.
13. The physical infrastructure has developed immensely since 2000: Roads; bridges galore, including the historic Rabacca Bridge, sea and river defences; construction of the iconic Argyle International Airport and the Canouan Jet Airport; Construction of the EC \$650 million Modern Port at Kingstown is nearing completion.
14. Amazing enhancement since 2000 of applied science and technology in life, living, and production. In the area of information community technology there are more cell phones than people in SVG; computers and laptops are universal; internet penetration is extensive. In 2000 all of this was non-existent.
15. Setting up NEMO and building resilience to natural disasters; there was practically nothing in place for disaster management before 2001.
16. Sports facilities and activities have advanced markedly since 2000: The huge upgrade of the Arnos Vale Sports Facility fit for top-level competitions in cricket and football; the construction of the Sir Vincent Beache Athletic Stadium; construction of quality sporting facilities in communities all over SVG.
17. Massive advances in facilities and activities in the area of popular culture, the performing arts, and literary cultural expressions.
18. Maintaining and consolidating monetary, financial, fiscal, and political stability, and low-moderate inflation. Taxation is far lower today than ever

before measured as a percentage of average incomes, GDP, or government revenue.

19. Targeted specific interventions were initiated after 2001 in respect of youths, students, farmers, workers, women, fisherfolk, the poor, and those affected by natural disasters. Among these are YES, SET, PRYME, ON-SITE, FAST, GYVE, FSC, and so forth.
20. Legislative reforms to improve the lived conditions of workers, women, farmers, and fishers were introduced after 2001.
21. The NIS was made more resilient and sustainable than ever before.
22. Leadership exhibited in regional and hemispheric affairs (the OECS, CARICOM, and CELAC). SVG, for example, drove the Revised Treaty of Basseterre establishing the economic union in the OECS. SVG also placed the issues of reparations for native genocide and the enslavement of African bodies on the CARICOM agenda; so, too, the issue of depenalization for possession of small quantities of marijuana and the establishment of a medicinal cannabis industry in CARICOM. SVG is the only CARICOM country ever to hold the Presidency Pro-Tempore of the Community of States of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC).
23. The pursuance of an activist foreign policy in the interest of the people of SVG and for peace, inclusive prosperity, and justice through multilateralism. SVG since 2001 has chalked up hugely impressive achievements globally such as being the smallest country ever to hold the Presidency of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations; the smallest country ever to Chair the Administrative Committee (5th Committee) of the United Nations; Joint Chairmanship with India of the L69 Committee on reform of the United Nations Security Council; and impressively as being the smallest country ever to sit as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Since 2001, SVG has established diplomatic relations with numerous countries; our Prime Minister is the only CARICOM Prime Minister to have addressed the African Union thrice (in Libya, Ethiopia, and Uganda).
24. Strengthened good governance enormously in terms of performance, accountability and transparency. Global agencies such as the World Bank, Freedom House, and Transparency International have commended SVG on all relevant indices of democratic good governance; among the best in the world.

25. Overall, SVG has moved from being assessed as a country with a “medium” level of human development to a “high level” in accord with the Human Development Index (HDI), as determined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

ONWARD TO HIGHER HEIGHTS

Despite the immense challenges of the last five years since 2020 (Covid-19 pandemic, volcanic eruptions, Hurricane Elsa and Beryl, and global turmoil), SVG has made immense progress. For example, although Hurricane Beryl in July 2024 caused damage and loss to our country of nearly EC \$1 billion or some 30 percent of GDP, SVG still grew by 4.8 percent last year, among the highest in the region after the outlier of Guyana. In 2024, capital spending was in excess of EC\$500 million; in 2000 (the last year of the NDP regime) capital spending amounted to only EC\$35 million.

We are rebuilding well after Beryl regarding the physical infrastructure; production and income support in the agriculture, tourism, and fisheries sectors; substantial support for affected persons; and rebuilding and repairing damaged houses in an unprecedented manner.

Meanwhile, the ULP government is elaborating further major development plans for on-going implementation over the next five years. The future of SVG depends on the ULP in communion with the people. Let’s elect the ULP for a 6th term. They are simply the best in every material particular.

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