

June 6th 2025

REBUILDING AFTER BERYL AS 2025 HURRICANE SEASON BEGINS

THE ISSUE

As global climate change accelerates with devastating knock-on effects to vulnerable Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as SVG, the 2025 Atlantic Hurricane Season commences, officially, on June 1, 2025. This year is predicted to be an “active season” following upon the “very active” 2024 season which delivered the category 5 hurricane Beryl to SVG on July 1, 2024.

Currently, we are deeply engaged in the continuing relief, recovery, and rebuilding after Beryl while preparing for the 2025 hurricane season. So far, the rebuilding is proceeding very well despite some hiccups and the efficacious preparations for 2025 are ongoing, always with the uncertainties and challenges associated with our country’s vulnerabilities and the global climate condition. One major hurricane can cause havoc to our lives, living, and production.

It is estimated that hurricane Beryl racked up damage and loss to SVG of roughly EC\$1 billion or some 30 percent of our country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Ten months after Beryl have witnessed incredible recovery and achievements in SVG in relief efforts, a return to normalcy despite some especial challenges in Union Island, rebuilding of houses and other physical infrastructure, real economic growth in 2024 – 2025, job creation and significant reduction in unemployment, enhanced social protection, all-round restoration in the functioning of society, continuing political stability, and good governance. Objective observers are hailing the massive endeavours of our government in solidarity with our people as a whole, and friends and allies overseas.

ON GOING RELIEF

On St. Vincent, there are some 1,000 persons (mainly from the Southern Grenadines) who are living in touristic accommodation (guest houses, apartments, houses) paid for by the government — rent, electricity, and water; there are also a few dozen persons, too, in shelters across SVG.

The shelterees are being assisted fully with food, water, medical assistance, and psycho-social support. As the rebuilding of home continues apace, the shelterees and occupants of touristic accommodation are returning to their homes. Thus far, some 4,000 of the roughly 6,000 houses to be repaired or rebuilt, have been attended to.

Meanwhile, millions of dollars have been spent on sea transport to provide free movement between St. Vincent and the Southern Grenadines.

PRODUCTION SUPPORT, INCOME SUPPORT, FAMILY ASSISTANCE

Between July and December 2025, over \$30 million (excluding spending on housing repairs) was expended by the government to recipients who suffered from hurricane Beryl. These monies were paid to over 10,000 persons in income support, production support, and family assistance of various types.

Between January and June 2024, over \$27 million is being spent through the Ministry of National Mobilisation, at the rate of \$600 per month to the head of over 5,000 households assessed to be in need as a consequence of Beryl: In April 2025, \$1,800 (\$600 for each month from January to March) was paid to 4,135 heads of households. Last week Wednesday, these persons received their April monies and on Friday they received their payments for the month of May. An additional 800 or so persons who were subsequently assessed as deserving of payments were each paid \$2,400 (January to April monies) last Wednesday and on last Friday they were paid \$600 each for the month of May. At the end of June 2025, all 5,000 plus persons will each receive their payments for the month of June.

Sometime in the first week of June 2025, over 3,000 farmers and fishers will receive a special payment of \$1000 in support. A further \$2 million is to be paid out later in June to fisherfolk who had their boats severely damaged by Beryl.

Never in the history of SVG has any government been so generous to persons affected by a natural disaster. This is the way of Labour Love! The Beryl payouts in 2025 are from monies borrowed from the World Bank by the ULP government for this purpose. We borrow money to give the people! Absolutely remarkable.

HOUSES ARE BEING REBUILT

It has been assessed that some 6,000 houses require repairing or complete rebuilding due to Beryl, plus a residue from the damage caused by the volcanic eruptions of 2021. The estimated cost of this venture is in excess of \$480 million. Thus far, over 4,000 houses have been repaired or rebuilt. The government continues to mobilise resources for the rebuilding of houses. Challenges reside, too, in a shortage of building materials from time to time, and an insufficiency of builders and construction workers, especially in the skills trades. We have trained in excess of 2000 persons in the last five years in skills of the building trades and have certified them appropriately. But the local and regional demand for our workers is huge.

In this rebuilding process, the government has been assisted with resources from the Gumbolimbo group of Ian Wace, workers from Romania, and a contingent of soldiers (40) from Guyana. Within a few weeks, some 20 construction workers will be arriving from Cuba to assist with the rebuilding in North Windward, North Leeward, and North Central Windward, among other areas.

It is worthy of note that almost all the houses on Canouan and Mayreau have been repaired or rebuilt; and some 60 percent on Union Island which was completely devastated.

Further, hundreds of stoves and fridges, free of cost, have been delivered, to home-owners who were affected by Beryl.

Due to bureaucratic delays, the supportive monies from the Saudi Fund for housing is yet to be realized. We are working assiduously to secure the release of these funds.

WATER, ELECTRICITY, INFRASTRUCTURE RESTORATION

The delivery of water and electricity services were swiftly restored to affected areas and houses, as all the circumstances permitted. There is a current upgrade of these supplies in every material particular.

Meanwhile, important infrastructure in schools, clinics, hospitals, police stations, government's administrative buildings, airports, and seaports have been repaired or rebuilt. The government has also assisted private sector entities in rebuilding their guest houses and apartment buildings in affected areas. And the Gumbolimbo group and Romanians have done exceptional work in assisting the government in providing an infrastructure uplift at the waterfront in Canouan. Plans are afoot to do the same in Union Island.

PREPARATIONS FOR 2025 HURRICANE SEASON

As Comrade Ralph has repeatedly informed the Parliament and the nation, we need to put aside "rainy day" money of at least EC \$120 million. This is done as follows: \$50 million from the Contingency Fund set up by the ULP government; \$54 million from the World Bank/International Development Association, a 45-year soft-loan through the instrument known as the Catastrophe Drawdown Deferred Option (CATDDO); \$13.5 million available in a disaster loan from the CDB; and an unspecified but certain grant from our trusted ally, Taiwan.

Usually, within 2 ½ weeks of any natural disaster the ULP government is before the Parliament with a Supplementary Estimate and Supplementary Appropriation Bill to address the disaster funding. In those 2 ½ weeks, Comrade Ralph usually secures additional monies, and still more when he goes "on the

road” overseas. It is like clockwork. We in the ULP are skilled at this; we have the experience in doing this.

NEMO is prepared and goes through its check-list of emergency shelters, training, community involvement, media engagement, linkages with external agencies such as CDEMA and RSS, and public education. NEMO emphasises plans by families and individuals in preparation for natural disasters. Disaster preparedness is everybody’s business.

This year, our Prime Minister is the Chair of the Council of Ministers of the Caribbean Disaster Management Agency (CDEMA); on June 27th he will Chair the Ministerial Council’s deliberations at the meeting in the Bahamas. On June 18th, Comrade Ralph also assumes the Chairmanship of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). And he is active in the Council of Ministers of the Regional Security System and has a leadership role in 2025 in CARICOM’s Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) which has an important role to play at the time of natural disasters. Leadership counts!

On June 1, 2025, our Prime Minister delivered his annual address to mark the start of the Atlantic Hurricane Season. In his address he spelt out the importance of individual and family plans and obligations in the preparation and management of natural disasters. The address is online. Please listen to it.

SUMMATION

Since 2001, SVG has been buffeted by 12 weather-related natural disasters of real consequence (hurricanes, storms, major landslides, major sea surges), 21 volcanic eruptions in April 2021, and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. The ULP government is skilled and experienced in preparing for, and managing, natural disasters. We have built the requisite institutions, including NEMO, and have established the regional and global linkages. Still, we can never be too prepared. Crucially, our people must stay informed and act in solidarity. One storm or hurricane can cause devastation and deaths.

ULP Article for week of June 6, 2025