**STRENGTHENING OUR PARTY, BUILDING OUR NATION**

**Introduction**

The Unity Labour Party (ULP) of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines held its 25th annual convention on Sunday 31st July 2022 at the Campden Park Secondary School. On a Sunday morning that was characterised by torrential rainfall and the residual effects of the overnight passage of a weather system, the outlook for the hosting of a successful convention seemed questionable. This convention was billed as the mother of all conventions, as it would determine the direction of our great party over the next 3 years, leading up to the General Elections in 2025. The theme “strengthening our party-building our nation” was appropriately chosen for this year’s convention to reflect the focus of the leadership of the ULP in ensuring that our organisation is well equipped to tackle the challenges to governance in this country today and in the future. The clear message coming out from the leadership of our party is that attention must be paid to the continued strengthening of this great party, its organs, with continuous emphasis on recruitment of young people, professionals, Vincentians from every strata of our society, while banking on the experience and wisdom of long-serving comrades who have fought the good fight with our party to keep the ULP in government. What was absolutely clear to all comrades who braved the weather to attend the 25th annual convention, was that the excellent leadership, not just of our party, but of our country is paramount in maintaining the stability that we enjoy as Vincentians even as the world is experiencing significant turmoil and upheaval. This is not suggest that we here in SVG are, or have been immune to the impacts of the global inflation and rising prices, but rather that the policies of our government have served to offer significant relief to our citizens even as we try to cope with these various challenges. It is agains this backdrop that our 25th annual convention was held, and the results were everything one could have hoped for and more.

**Leadership that Unifies and Strengthens**

At last Sunday’s convention, the party elected officers to fill 4 senior positions of the ULP; the Chairman, deputy chairman, political leader and deputy political leader. Each of these four positions received a single nomination to fill that position, a clear sign of the faith and trust reposed in the leadership of the party. Comrade Snagg was reelected as Chairman, Comrade Curtis elected as deputy chairman, Comrade Gomery elected as deputy political leader and our beloved comrade Ralph returned as political leader. It must be emphasised that comrade Ralph has lead this great party since being elected as political leader in 1998, and continues to serve the ULP and this country with dedication, commitment and and sound judgement, always putting the wishes and interests of Vincentians first. Over the last 23 plus years of his leadership of this great party, 21 years as prime minister of this country, we have seen and benefitted from the many policies implemented by our ULP government. Consequently, we remain fully confident in his ability to lead. The wisdom of comrade Ralph, has prompted him to begin the discussion of transition in leadership and this transition has taken on a practical dimension with the inclusion of young, vibrant dimension who are now members of cabinet, guided by the experience of the more seasoned comrades Ralph and Gomery.

Sunday’s convention was a clear and unequivocal statement of the continued faith in the leadership of comrade Ralph to continue to manage the transition that has began and will culminate in the selection of a leader appropriately prepared and ready for the challenges to governance of our Small Island Development State. Young, intelligent and capable individuals continue to grow and develop, honing their skills as the representatives of the people and managers of our economy under the wise leadership of comrade Ralph. This speaks well for the continued growth of the ULP and our comrades remain confident in the fact that the leadership of our party will rest in good hands, once the transition is completed. It was an exciting, powerful demonstration of unity and strength at Campden Park on Sunday as the comrades sang and fellowshipped, lifting up the hands of our comrade leader, in full support and endorsement of his re-election and continued leadership. Anyone watching the live stream of our ULP convention saw a powerful display on a strong, vibrant party, united under our current leadership and fully in support of the managed-transition currently taking place. The ability of our comrade to be a force of unity, bringing together our comrades of different generations to adopt a common goal and single purpose, remains an amazing accomplishment that no other leader in contemporary Caribbean politics has been able to replicate. At the end of our convention, our comrades left the venue energised, with a sense of purpose, unified behind the leadership of our party and ready to take the message of the ULP forward, as the only party capable of managing the affairs of SVG.

**Conclusion**

Even as we celebrate the success of our 25th annual convention, we remain mindful that complacency is the enemy of progress, hence we continue to work to ensure our party continues to grow from strength to strength. The only political party that is equipped to take SVG forward is this ULP as we have the leadership that has and continues to lead our economic development and social transformation in the building of that modern, competitive, many-sided, post-colonial economy, that is at once local, national, regional and global. The rank and file of the ULP stands with our leadership and congratulate them on managing a successful 25th annual convention.