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PRIME MINISTER OF SAINT LUCIA

VIII Summit of the Americas  
Lima, Peru, April 14, 2018

***Theme: Democratic Governance Against Corruption***

Mr. President

I would like to thank our host, His Excellency Martin Vizcarra for the generous hospitality extended to us by Peru at this VIII Summit of the Americas. I congratulate the people of this beautiful nation for their resilience, vibrant spirit and the warmth that they exude.

Saint Lucia supports the statements made condemning the actions that have cost the lives of Ecuadorian journalists and we offer our sympathies to the families of those killed. We also support all efforts to resolve the conflict in Syria and lend our voice to others that reject the use of chemical weapons, joining the call to eliminate their use.

Mr. President

I am pleased to be seated here today amidst distinguished colleagues on whose shoulders rest not only the responsibility of leading our respective governments, but who are also charged with ensuring the social advancement of our peoples - through sustainable economic growth.

This is a daunting task, which demands respect for human rights and the rule of law; transparency and accountability of processes and institutions; democratic and open citizen participation; citizen security; and access to health, education and social services in an equitable and sustainable manner.

We are called on to deliver on all of these by practicing responsible and good governance and by denying corruption a foothold.

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Mr. President,

My Government remains committed to fulfilling its responsibility and just recently during a budget debate, I reiterated our promise to the people of Saint Lucia - to be transparent and accountable in our management of the State's affairs - giving full account of our stewardship while seeking to respond to their needs.

Allow me to highlight three things:

- My administration upon entry into office in 2016, required that all Ministers, all Permanent Secretaries and all Board Members of statutory agencies take and pass a course in

governance – a Charter Director Certificate which we all have to pass regularly to serve in these positions;

- In April of 2017, we amended the Crown Proceedings Act to allow for the recovery of public funds, removing a statute of limitations that once existed and to hold public officials accountable;
- And on the wider Hemispheric level, Saint Lucia recently signed the OAS's Mechanism for Follow-Up on the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (MESICIC), a mechanism that the document that we are a party to at this Summit, references;

To be clear, these are merely tools, a means to an end; it is also clear that if these tools are not utilized, if these mechanisms that we strive so hard to introduce are ignored – we will condemn our country and its people to mismanagement and the misappropriation of scarce resources.

Mr. President

As a small island developing state with limited resources, Saint Lucia shares with every country represented here, the ultimate goal of good governance founded on democratic principles that eschews corruption. The problem however often lies in how we are viewed by others; that we are vilified too often through the words of parties that fail to exhibit transparency and openness in their reporting of our supposed transgressions.

- How does a small country like mine establish frameworks to ensure Democratic Governance Against Corruption, when reports by other countries and institutions attempt to blackmail us into adopting policies and measures that themselves have not gone through a transparent and democratic process?

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- I ask, why is there a constant effort to move the line, and create more onerous global regulations every time countries like mine meet certain benchmarks in industry areas where we have a competitive advantage?
- It is difficult not to question whether it is a less than transparent global system that seeks to stack the deck against smaller nations.

From a SIDS perspective, new layers of rules from up on high, from backrooms in Europe and elsewhere, are not helpful to addressing the needs of my nationals and the people of my/our region. I can understand why some say “no” to openness and the transparency of their system – but not us.

Mr. President

We embrace criticism and compliments equally – as a cabinet and government confident that we are doing the right thing as it relates to addressing the scourge of corruption. We are at times humbled by the support of friends who assist our efforts to advance on our goals.

For those external partners who want to help us, we ask that you coordinate your programs in tandem with government's determined needs, and assist in such a way that builds partnerships rather than to seek to impose a particular set of governance mechanisms.

We ask that you recognize that transparency should not be so onerous that it takes precedence over development; that the power of the seal, should never relegate the needs of the populace to the back burner - economic progress and good governance go hand in hand. Impractical and subjective mechanisms are unsustainable.

Mr. President

On the issue of economic development and good governance, allow me to comment on Venezuela and the fact that the deterioration of democracy and the abandonment of transparency and good governance - has caused Venezuela's economy to collapse. This is why Saint Lucia has supported Lima Group statements, as this situation has had a negative effect not only on the citizens of that country, but it has created a security risk within our Hemisphere. While we continue to appreciate the contribution Venezuela has made - as a brother - our shared responsibility to the citizens there and our own citizenry, obligates us to express our continued concern about the situation in that country.

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Mr. President

Corruption is a weed that *can* be expelled from the garden –when it does not find fertile soil it cannot flourish. While rules of conduct or engagement must be transparent, straightforward and with adherence to agreed upon norms and standards –it is a collective effort that needs all of our participation. We need a better integration of systems, more sharing of data and knowledge as the individual actions of states are at times not nearly enough.

I would also like to suggest that this issue be part of our continued discussions and more importantly our continued actions, and that we demand from each other shared, yet attainable benchmarks.

We must value our democracies which are inherently based on one-citizen/one-vote, thereby entitling each and every person the expectation that government will manage the public good, and provide essential services to secure their present and future. The people must trust their elected representatives to be transparent and accountable to them as citizens.

In closing, as we as a collective, commit to the various goals and aspirations outlined in the Lima Commitment - to develop and strengthen anti-corruption policies and mechanisms within our borders – I remind us all that we must be cognizant of our responsibility for and to each other.

I will admit to you that my St. Lucia cannot do it alone and look to each and everyone of you to join with me to ensure that our theme - Democratic Governance Against Corruption – lives on beyond today, and is a pathway that guides our future actions. Our promise to our citizens and the future, our youth, demands it.

THANK YOU