

**ON BECOMING
SPOTLIGHTS OF TRANSFORMATION**

**Dr. the Hon. Gale Rigobert
Minister of Education, Innovation, Gender Relations and
Sustainable Development**

**(A speech delivered at the 6th GEF Assembly Meeting
Held in Vietnam, June 2018)**

Salutations: Adopting Protocol already established.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since I entered the realm of politics, from the relative comfort of academia, I have been in search of a programme which can truly empower people. A programme which can ignite a spirit of passion for change and raise people and their communities to become not merely beacons of change, but spotlights of transformation. I think I have found one, which not only achieves that yearning of mine, but accomplishes my objectives by **promising and delivering**. I speak here of the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme, which is implemented by UNDP on behalf of the GEF Partnership.

Earlier this month, I had the high honour and privilege of delivering a major speech at the annual report presentation of the GEF Small Grants Programme to the People and Government of Saint Lucia. It is during this engagement, I became totally convinced of the programme's impacts on the three pillars of sustainable development, i.e. **the intersecting economic, social and environmental pillars**.

Ladies and Gentlemen let me deal with the environmental pillar and impacts in the GEF Focal Areas. Between October 2012 and December

2017, there has been a plethora of achievements. Here are some notable achievements:

In the Biodiversity Focal Area, the programme **has contributed in the preparation of:**

- the establishment of Saint Lucia's first Bio-stimulant Processing Plant, which is transforming Sargassum Seaweed from a nuisance on beaches to a plant tonic, which has been laboratory tested, and proven to have insignificant micro quantities of arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury. The micro enterprise which has emerged from this partnership, has begun to export its product from Saint Lucia.

In the Climate Change Mitigation & Adaptation Focal Areas, **the programme has contributed to:**

- designing, testing and manufacturing **the first mobile, fully solarised and brine neutralizing system in the Eastern Caribbean**. This system can address water needs at any time, and particular in the aftermath of disasters.

I wish here to inform this distinguished gathering, that this innovation was the brain child of a young fisherman who did not complete third form in Secondary School, and whose invention won the call for projects from the Pacific Island of Nauru, where potable water is in very short supply. Mr. Karlis Noel is now engaged in designing the second generation desalinator system, which will be more efficient than the first and will soon be shipped to Nauru, after which, he travels to commission the system and train those selected to manage it. **Ladies and Gentlemen, here is an excellent example of Research and Innovation and South-South Partnership, across two oceans.**

In the Land Degradation and Chemicals Focal Areas, **the GEF SGP has also contributed by:**

- promoting the development and establishment of organic farms, phasing out toxic chemicals in agriculture and the greening of the Floral Industry;

Ladies and Gentlemen, the economic and social impacts were equally impressive. The total investment from October 2012 to December 2017 was US\$6.65 million, with a co-financing ratio of 1:1.60. This investment generated over one thousand (1000) jobs during project cycle management, incomes of over US\$425,000, and training of over four

thousands (4000) persons in a variety of areas from protected areas management to basic toxicology, and micro-business enterprise.

I could go on and on but will conclude by saying, the GEF SGP Saint Lucia programme is now using a Landscape Approach; thoroughly integrating sustainability and resilience into project design and is well on its way to becoming a fully-fledged Results Management Programme.

Finally, what is most encouraging about the SGP is its inclusive and participatory approach; its promotion and support of research and innovation; its growing attraction to young people, men and women; and the willingness of its employees and the members of the National Steering Committee to go **Beyond the Call of Duty**. With this magnificent invention of the SGP, I convey my gratitude and that of my Government to the GEF Secretariat, the UNDP GEF programme, the SGP Central Programme Management Team, the United Nations Office for Project Services and above all, the people and communities of Saint Lucia for all their efforts. Each project is not only creating hope where there was none before but transforming each community into a spotlight of transformation. A situation we need more of in our world today.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I Thank You.