

Message by Hon Luke Browne, Minister of Health, Wellness and the Environment, to mark World Water Day 2016

Ladies and gentlemen, in 1993, the United Nations General Assembly designated March 22 as International World Water Day. This was done in a bid to highlight on an ongoing basis the importance of water to our way of life and the need for the sustainable management of water resources. The theme for International World Water Day 2016 is “Water and Jobs.”

This theme speaks directly to at least two things. One, that many persons in the world are employed in the water supply sector. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is no exception. Our very own Central Water and Sewerage Authority has roughly 300 employees, with just over 200 of them being employed in the water supply aspect of its operations, while the remaining one-third of the CWSA workforce is involved in the provision

of solid waste services. The other matter to which this year's theme speaks directly is the fact that nearly all jobs depend on the availability of freshwater. The operations of Breweries, Hotels and Resorts, farms and other commercial enterprises would be badly hampered in the absence of a reliable water supply, much to our employment and broader economic detriment.

The Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, pointed out in his address for today that the basic provision of adequate water, sanitation and hygiene services at home, at school and in the workplace enables a robust economy by contributing to a healthy and productive population and workforce.

The good news is that the CWSA has a very good record in the delivery of water to all segments and groupings of the local population. Today,

the Central Water and Sewage Authority supplies running water to 98% of households. The actual number of households served by this statutory corporation moved from 24,000 in 2002 to 38,000 in 2016. This represents a great leap forward, and the intention is to stay on top of the ever-increasing demand.

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, through the CWSA, has over the past 14 or so years invested heavily in the water supply plant and infrastructure. There was the \$24 million Windward Water Project of 2003, and since then a further \$13 million or so has been invested in water supply projects. Additional investments which are related to climate change and which will be geared towards making our water supply more resilient, flexible and better able to withstand floods and natural disasters are earmarked for the future. We also hope to bolster our water storage capacity.

On World Water Day 2016, let us reaffirm that St. Vincent and the Grenadines is committed to the optimal use of its water resources from an economic and human development standpoint. We understand very well that water is central to our way of life, the functioning of our economy and our environmental eco-system. The matter of water resource management touches and concerns, in a profound way the question of sustainable development and, therefore, finds expression in the Sustainable Development Goals. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is already known for the quality of its drinking water. We hope to continue using this important natural asset in the furtherance of healthy national objectives and the pursuit of wellness and prosperity.