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25/2/2026

PM FRIDAY URGES CARICOM TO FURTHER ENGAGE THE PEOPLE OF THE REGION

Leaders are being challenged to do a better job in engaging people in the affairs of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

The suggestion comes from Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) Dr. Hon. Godwin Friday who noted that SVG, like the other CARICOM countries, have been coming up short in relation to engaging the masses.

Addressing the 50th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in Basseterre, Saint Kitts and Nevis on February 24, 2026, the Prime Minister noted that his fresh perspective may help reinvigorate efforts to strengthen CARICOM and accelerate regional progress.

He reflected on the long and sometimes turbulent history of Caribbean integration, from early federation efforts to the formation of CARICOM, noting that despite disagreements and setbacks, the regional movement has endured because of necessity.

The Prime Minister stressed that strengthening public engagement across the region is essential to enhancing the credibility and relevance of CARICOM within member states.

“What we do here and in other forums must not only be about them, but also with them, for that is where our strength truly lies,” the Prime Minister said, urging leaders to better connect regional decisions with the everyday realities of Caribbean citizens.

Dr. Friday acknowledged that doubts sometimes arise about the pace and direction of integration but insisted that such doubts should focus only on how to move forward, never on whether to do so.

He identified several pressing priorities facing the region, including eliminating poverty and creating prosperity, removing obstacles to commerce, including currency-related barriers, closing workforce skills gaps to support employment, confronting climate change, securing resilience financing, and promoting peace and security in Haiti and the wider Caribbean.

The Prime Minister called on fellow leaders to accelerate the integration process, noting that while the road ahead may be challenging, it remains a viable and necessary path.

“Please let us quicken the pace. The road ahead may be arduous and full of obstacles but it is a viable path, made even more certain when we decide to walk together. When we hold our neighbour’s hand now, we make the journey easier and safer for those who follow,” Dr. Friday said.

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