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YOUTHS HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN FISHERIES

The Unleashing of the Blue Economy of the Caribbean (UBEC) project, supported by the World Bank, is playing a key role in upgrading and strengthening Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' fisheries and aquaculture sector.

The initiative encompasses several major programmes, including the retrofitting of fishing vessels to enhance fishing quality and improve fisher safety, strengthening systems to combat illegal fishing, developing food safety and inspection systems, and supporting the growth of sea moss, conch, and lobster aquaculture.

Speaking during Fisherman's Day activities held outside the Kingstown Fish Market (Little Tokyo) on Monday, May 25, 2026, Minister of Fisheries, Marine and Land Conservation and Climate Resilience, Hon. Conroy Huggins, highlighted the government's ongoing commitment to modernizing the sector.

"The government also recognizes the importance of improving fisheries infrastructure across the country," Minister Huggins said. "Plans continue for the refurbishment of fisheries facilities, jetties, boat ramps, and climate-resilient storage facilities to better protect fishers' investments and strengthen the industry," the Fisheries Minister disclosed.

The Minister emphasized that the future of fisheries extends well beyond traditional fishing activities and increasingly includes aquaculture, seafood processing, marine science, conservation, innovation, and technology.

"This is why the Ministry continues to invest in training and capacity building for fishers and fisheries personnel in areas such as safety at sea, seafood safety systems, fish handling and processing, master certification, and modern fishing technologies," he stated.

In addition to supporting existing industry stakeholders, the Ministry is creating new opportunities for young people through fisheries training programmes, seafood product development initiatives, and technical education partnerships.

“The future of fisheries must include youths, women, entrepreneurs, processors, and innovators,” Minister Huggins said. “This is truly a new season in the fisheries sector.” He further noted that the Ministry remains committed to protecting the marine environment on which the industry depends through partnerships with regional and international organizations.

As part of these efforts, coral reef restoration projects are advancing throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines to strengthen marine habitats, support fish populations, and improve climate resilience.

The Ministry is also enhancing its response to climate-related challenges, including hurricanes, coral bleaching, and sargassum influxes. A key component of this strategy is a science-based Queen Conch Recovery Initiative, which includes the establishment of a Queen Conch hatchery and nursery unit in Union Island to support stock rebuilding and long-term sustainability.

“That project will start before the year’s end,” the Minister announced. “Our approach is clear. Where science tells us resources are declining, we must act responsibly. Conservation today is production and sustainability for tomorrow.”

Minister Huggins stressed that the government cannot achieve these objectives alone and called for greater collaboration among stakeholders. “Sustainable fisheries require strong partnerships and shared responsibility,” he said. “Fishers must continue to protect fish stocks and follow regulations, while communities must help safeguard reefs, mangroves, beaches, and seagrass beds.”

Addressing the nation’s youth, the Minister encouraged them to view the fisheries sector as a field filled with opportunity rather than one in decline. “To our young people, I say clearly, the fisheries sector is not a dying industry,” he said. “Fisheries is a sector of innovation, entrepreneurship, science, technology, and opportunity. The future of the blue economy will depend on your creativity, your skills, and your leadership.”

He concluded by emphasizing the evolving nature of the industry and the critical role young people will play in shaping its future. “The image of fisheries has changed. The vision of fisheries has changed, and you, the youths, have a big role to play in the future of this industry.”

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