



**MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER OF GRENADA  
AND CARICOM STATISTICS CHAMPION  
DR. THE RIGHT HONOURABLE KEITH C. MITCHELL  
LAUNCH OF THE CARICOM POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS  
AUGUST 3, 2021**

Sisters and brothers of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), for the last 16 months, the COVID-19 pandemic has dominated our focus. It has single-handedly wreaked havoc on the health and well-being of our people, destroyed already fragile economies and curtailed our educational, social and communal activities and daily human interaction.

Our region has a combined number of positive COVID-19 cases of around 200,000, a total death toll that has surpassed 4,000, thousands of job losses, scores of business closures, and significant loss of income. It is against this backdrop that this 2020 Round of Population and Housing Census in CARICOM is being launched under the slogan, *Leave no one behind, Everyone counts*. This theme is an urgent plea to save lives, restore and improve our livelihoods and to build resilience across CARICOM, starting with our people, our households, our villages, our towns and our respective countries.

This Round of Census should have commenced during 2020 but was delayed due to the pandemic. The time has come for us to forge ahead. Given the major changes in our social, economic and environmental landscape due to the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the ongoing impact of climate change on our Small Island Developing States, it is imperative that we collect the data that will allow us to assess the magnitude of the impact of these occurrences, to better plan for our future, to adjust to this new normal and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as set out by the United Nations. Sisters and brothers, undertaking the census in CARICOM countries at this time, is a defining moment.

In addition to its inherent value in better informing the decision-making process, in times of natural disasters such as the recent volcanic eruption in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, or the intense hurricanes and extreme floods of recent years that ravaged many of our islands, the Census can provide critical data and knowledge about smallest, most remote areas. In times of crisis, the census can provide answers to questions such as:

- How many persons will have to be relocated?
- What buildings are available for relocation?

- Are there persons with special needs who require support during relocation?
- Where is the infrastructural support for the mobilisation efforts in these small areas?

The census will also enable us to begin addressing issues relating to gender equity, the elderly, food insecurity and internet access. The population census can provide benchmark data, disaggregated by sex, age, educational attainment and economic activity, as well as provide information on the percentage of households that are having challenges such as acute hunger or lack of internet access.

The Census also provides our business people with information on population distribution within and across countries, which will help inform their investment decisions. The benefits and use of the census data demonstrate clearly why you should ensure that you are counted.

I am informed, that for this 2020 Census Round, six of our CARICOM Countries intend to conduct their field enumeration this year with the remaining countries starting their census in 2022. In Barbados, enumerators went into the field yesterday, one day after their reference Census Day on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2021. Grenada will tackle this activity from September 15, followed closely by St Kitts and Nevis, The Bahamas, Cayman Islands and Dominica.

One positive impact of the pandemic is that it has forced us to make better use of the available technology. I am pleased to note that for this Census Round, countries will include innovative approaches, such as Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing, using devices such as tablets and laptops to locate the dwellings of people to be interviewed and to capture the data of all individuals. Given the pandemic, countries are also likely to use the telephone system and the internet to capture census data. As the Prime Minister with responsibility for Science and Technology in the CARICOM quasi- Cabinet, I welcome these innovative uses of ICT in the census.

This CARICOM Census launch taking place today, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, is part of the tried and tested regionally-coordinated approach to census-taking that includes the coming together of the National Statistical Offices in member states and associate members under a Regional Census Coordinating Committee, to support one another in this massive exercise. This approach is also consistent with the principles underlying the CARICOM Regional Strategy for the Development of Statistics (RSDS) that I championed in 2018.

Led by the CARICOM Secretariat, the regionally-coordinated approach optimises the benefits of working together on the census by:

- Ensuring significant cost savings through the pooling and sharing of facilities, expertise and other resources across the region;
- Examining common challenges and devising strategic solutions to these challenges;
- Avoiding duplication of efforts in the light of scarce resources;
- Promoting technical cooperation and transferring technology from those countries more endowed with census knowledge to those less endowed, and
- Developing competent and skilled census personnel to conduct the census activity

The development and use of common and harmonised methodologies, instruments, procedures and practices under this approach, leads to regionally comparable census data of high quality that can inform national and regional census analysis and provide the evidence to support our public and private decision-making, policies and programmes. I urge our international development partners to support the regionally-coordinated approach since it can result in a multiplier effect of the scarce resources that are available to fund the massive Census undertaking in CARICOM SIDS.

In closing, I encourage all CARICOM citizens and residents to show patriotism and dedication to your respective countries and to the entire region, by participating in this important exercise of nation building.

Let us accept our individual responsibility to be counted. Ensure that you, your friends and family members are all counted in this census round, in every country across our beloved Caribbean Community. Let us see the “**us**” in census. I strongly encourage you to ensure that the words of the CARICOM region-wide slogan becomes a reality: ***Leave no one behind, Everyone counts***

I thank you.