



OFFICE OF THE
PREMIER
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

Statement to Parliament congratulations to Barbados
By Premier Hon. G. Wayne Panton, MP, JP
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Parliament

Mr. Speaker, this week the Caribbean Community and indeed the world has borne witness to a tremendous moment in history as Barbados has become a Republic, swearing in Dame Sandra Mason as its first president therefore replacing Her Majesty The Queen as its head of state.

On the eve of its 55th anniversary of its independence from Great Britain, Barbados has for the last time lowered the Union Jack in the presence of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and affirmed its political maturity and great aspirations as a nation by taking this major step forward.

Barbados has always played a central role in advancing the cause of the Caribbean Community. I think of the great contributions of Sir Grantley Adams who as Premier of Barbados was chosen as the Prime Minister of the West Indies Federation, albeit short-lived.

We should also recall Barbados' first Prime Minister the Right Hon Errol Barrow, QC who expressed the deepest desires of a post-colonial Caribbean in the following way:

"I think that we in the West Indies should not be afraid to speak our minds. I think that we in the West Indies should not be looking around for somebody to lead and work out our own political and economic philosophy."

In taking this monumental step to become a Republic, Barbados is certainly not looking around for someone else to lead. In fact, Barbados has been blessed with many exemplars and gifted leaders who have helped to lay the groundwork to become a Republic. I think of the great economic mind of the late Hon. Owen Arthur, who was a powerful voice both regionally and internationally. Many current and former members of this Parliament had the privilege of considering the late Prime Minister, Hon. David Thompson a friend and esteemed colleague.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to consider current Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Mia Mottley, QC a dear friend. We can all be proud as Caribbean people of her articulate, passionate thought leadership as the world navigates threats to democracy, the climate crisis, inequality and the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In all of these things she has been a beacon of light and inspiration.

Having recently returned from COP26, I can personally attest to the impact and influence she has had on that global forum - ensuring that these key issues do not remain an academic or tick-the-box exercise, but that the impacts on us, small and developing communities are considered and indeed addressed.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to encourage us, rather than viewing this as some sort of move away, to consider Barbados becoming a republic a giant leap forward. While no longer one of the realms of Great Britain, Barbados remains a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and of course it will continue to play a central role in CARICOM. This is an important statement and moment for all democracies around the world.

Barbados can truly be described as a friend to all within the region, and on this higher platform of being the world's newest Republic, I am confident that we will continue to see Barbados take an even more significant role in using their voice to shed light, especially for the smaller nations and territories around the world.

On behalf of the Government and people of the Cayman Islands, I wish to extend warm congratulations and the very best wishes to the Government and people of Barbados. And to the many Barbadians, or as we affectionately call them 'Bajans', who have made the Cayman Islands home, we fully appreciate your abiding sense of pride and excitement as Barbados embarks on this new journey. Our links and ties to Barbados remain strong and we are grateful for the positive impact that the Barbadian community has had and continues to have on the Cayman Islands.

May God continue bless and prosper the good people of the Republic of Barbados and may history consider this the ushering in of a new era of excellence for Barbados.

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