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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address by
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Director-General
of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization
(UNESCO)

on the occasion of the launch of the Capacity-building
in Community Media project in the Carib Country

St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 12 January 2006

Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Students,

I am delighted to be in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the Carib Country, one of the homes of the original people of the Caribbean. Thank you all for the warm welcome I have received.

I know that you have faced many challenges in your efforts to preserve your cultural identity. One of UNESCO's missions is indeed to support the diversity of cultures in the world. Here in the Carib Country, we are today launching a community multimedia project in Sandy Bay, which will use the latest technologies to facilitate access to knowledge and networking among the Carib people in St Vincent and the Grenadines and, indeed, the Caribbean. The involvement of young people in cultural programmes is important for reaching these goals. I therefore encourage you to utilize these tools in rejuvenating the Garifuna Youth Movement in Sandy Bay.

I have been informed about the North Windward Development Project, which is being spearheaded by the North Windward Development Committee, and I believe that there are obvious synergies between this and the community multimedia project. Our hope is that activities surrounding this project will bring fresh impetus to the Learning Resource Centre and stimulate communication and information dissemination in the Carib Country.

Access to new technologies is also fundamental to social advancement and I am happy that UNESCO can play a role, in support of Government efforts, to provide you with these tools. I should also applaud your Government's move to establish a National Network of Learning Resource Centres. I take this opportunity to encourage the development of a national plan and common programmes for these centres. UNESCO is happy to offer our guidance in this respect, using the Caribbean Network of Community Multimedia Centres.

Let me describe briefly to you the activity for which we are gathered here today.

As some of you may know, this project is a part of a larger regional project being implemented in indigenous communities across the Caribbean in such countries as Belize, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Guyana and Suriname. It seeks to address poverty in isolated indigenous communities using integrated community media and the creation of marketable multimedia products. By integrated community media, we mean an interweaving of radio, Internet, computers and other multimedia tools.

The aim is to reduce the isolation of the indigenous communities by providing access to ICTs, training and infrastructure, as well as facilitating the development of local content.

The integration of Internet connectivity, the community library, activities at the Sandy Bay All Age School and the establishment of a community radio at the Sandy Bay Learning Resource Centre will create a central information access point for the entire Sandy Bay community. In this regard, true community ownership is crucial. The centre should therefore be created by the community, run for the benefit of the community and managed by the community. We therefore applaud the recent establishment of the Community-based Management Committee for this important project.

I would like to thank our main partners in these endeavours - North Windward Development Committee (NWDC), Garifuna Heritage Foundation, and the Ministries of Telecommunication, Education, Agriculture and Social Development.

It now gives me great pleasure to launch UNESCO's Community Media project in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Thank you.