

## **FOREWORD**

The preparation and release of this National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), which was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers on **[insert date]**, are significant in many respects.

St. Lucia, as a young developing nation, is committed to international cooperation in the field of conservation and sustainable development, and this document is another testimony of this commitment. In accordance with the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), we have outlined the policies and actions, which are needed to conserve our natural assets and use them sustainably. We have identified a number of programmes and projects, and we have begun to put in place the institutional mechanisms required for effective implementation. We look forward to the support and collaboration of our regional and international partners in making this NBSAP a reality.

This document is also important because it is another expression of our collective awareness of the fact that our future depends, to a very large extent, on our ability to manage our natural capital. Our quality and uniqueness as a tourism destination, our cultural identity, our agriculture, our fisheries and the health of so many other sectors rely on the maintenance of our biological diversity and on our ability to use it wisely, sustainably and creatively. This plan demonstrates that conservation is an integral part of development, and that development could not be lasting without the ecosystems, the species and the genes with which we have been endowed, and which we have the responsibility to manage.

The significance of this document is not only in its contents, but it is also, and perhaps more importantly, in the process by which it has been developed. Under the competent leadership of its Co-ordinator, Mrs. Dawn Pierre-Nathoniell of our Department of Fisheries, the NBSAP Team has facilitated an innovative consultative process, which has involved an impressive number of stakeholders from various horizons. Thanks to the support from the United Nations Environment Programme/Global Environmental Facility (UNEP/GEF), we have been able to mobilise our own national experts, and to build our own understanding of issues, needs and priorities. As a result, we have a document which reflects the views of all parties concerned, which has benefited from our own knowledge and expertise, and which provides a realistic path for action.

I express my gratitude to all those who have been involved in this unique and exciting process, and I call on every St. Lucian to participate in the urgent task of conserving and managing the rich biological diversity of our island home.

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**HON. B. CASSIUS ELIAS**  
**Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries**