

**PVC and Campus Principal, Professor Clement Sankat**

**Room 101, Faculty of Engineering, UWI St Augustine**

**Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2008**

**3.30 p.m.**

**WORLD FOOD DAY 2008**

- Senator The Honourable Arnold Piggott, Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources
- Mr. Simeon Yearwood, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Land & Marine Resources
- Marion Alleyne on behalf of Florita E. Kentish, FAO Representative, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and Suriname
- Neil Pierre, Acting Resident Coordinator United Nations' System Operational Activities
- Pauline Dowlath, Chairperson, National World Food Day Committee
- Member of the UWI St Augustine Campus Management,
- Other esteemed colleagues,
- Distinguished guests,
- Members of the media,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

**Good afternoon.**

Well let me start by saying how nice it feels to be coming back home to 101. Just last week at my Installation Ceremony, I was saying how privileged I have been to work in this Faculty of Engineering for almost thirty years, and how much I respect the work ethic that is entrenched here. I want to begin by thanking you for hosting today significant ceremony.

This ceremony is significant because it commemorates World **Food Day** at a time when dramatic rises in world **food prices** are creating a global **food crisis**. World Food Day 2008 has the theme “World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bio-energy”. This theme brings together three global issues—Food Security, Climate Change and Bio-energy—all of which are very important to us, not just as a Caribbean region, but also as a University and as a Campus.

Here at The University of the West Indies, we recognise, first of all, that these global issues are all interconnected. Secondly, we recognise that the implications for the quality of life that we live throughout the Caribbean region will be both **immediate** and **permanent**, and that we will be affected not just as individuals but also as small-island, developing nation-states. Finally, we recognise that taken together, these challenges represent new face of the persistent demand on this regional institution to lead the way in formulating affordable and applicable solutions to the major issues touching the lives of the people of the Caribbean.

Our response to these challenges has been strong, relevant and multi-focused. But I would like to call attention to just two of the ways in which we've been responding to these very real global challenges. The first is our Strategic Plan. The Vice Chancellor of our University, Professor E. Nigel Harris, has boldly announced our five-year Strategic Plan, through which we are actively seeking to

strengthen collaborative partnerships with non-governmental agencies, such as the United Nations and with our regional governments. On that note, let me say how happy I am to see such strong representation from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources. *Thank you for coming.*

A second, significant component of our response to the challenges of Food, Energy and Environment is in the ongoing research of our Faculty here at the St Augustine Campus. I am happy to be part of an academic institution that is pursuing scholarship in its truest sense. I can point to my colleagues, Professor Indar Ramnarine, Professor John Agard and Professor Pat Umaharan, whose work in the fields of Aquaculture, Environmental Policy and Crop Science is clear and present proof that, for us at UWI St Augustine, scholarship is not about the application of knowledge to the solution of abstract, theoretical problems. I am happy to serve here at The St Augustine

Campus of The University of the West Indies, where we understand that academic research must be trying to solve real problems.

And I think that I should end of that note. Because that is the essence of what I want to say to you this afternoon. We are not an academic institution in an ivory tower. We understand that when you do research in isolation, one of two things will happen. Either your research will be targeted at the wrong problems, or if you do target the right problems, you are likely to find that your solutions are not relevant to the specific contexts to which they must be applied. In that light, we understand the need to pay attention to the **needs** of our farmers. We understand the need to show care and respect for the **products** of our farmers. Therefore, speaking on behalf of the leadership level of UWI St Augustine, let me once again say that how totally supportive we are of this initiative, which fosters precisely the kind collaborative partnerships that we must create and develop

in order to formulate meaningful and workable responses to the complex challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I commend you for your good work in putting this event together, I congratulate you for your vision in calling these people together, and I join with you this morning in pursuing not just Food Security, but the security of the future of our Caribbean region.

I thank you.

October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008.