**Speech Delivered at the Caribbean Conference of Mayors held at the Regional Headquarters at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus in 2017**

In April 1981 Daniel Yankelovich, a social analyst, wrote a very insightful article in Psychology Today. His principal thrust was to analyze how Americans were thinking about life and where we were headed should such ideas go uncriticized. It was a warning to the West. In his opening remarks he defined the role and the imperative of culture. Quoting sociologist Daniel Bell, he said “Culture is the effort to provide a coherent set of answers to the existential situations that confront all human beings in the passage of their lives.”

One may ask where do you get that idea from that culture is a search for coherence? Ravi Zacharias answer to that is do you want the answer to that question to be coherent or incoherent. And I wonder if somewhat that is not what we are about today in this conference: deepening relationships and understanding among cities and townships across the Caribbean Region in search of a coherent set of answers to the existential situations confronting our cities and towns in this era. Our answers to the challenges facing us must fit together and make sense. Our answers must be able to resiolve the issues we face. Whether they be issues and challenges of public order, public safety and security, public cleansing or enhancing the economies of our cities and towns.

As local government practitioners we must never govern without committing to understanding the challenges that affect our cities and townships that impact the lives of people. Therefore, we ought to explore and promote collaboration among our cities and townships.

The real outcome of these challenges is that if left unattended they eat away at the foundations of our cities and towns and eventually paralyze them. Yes, cities do suffer from ill health and do die. History ios replete with once great cities and towns now lying in waste and ruin. So, our cities and towns, which at times seem so healthy, strong and prosperous can and will die if managed without foresight, understanding and imagination. May I add, if managed without a coherent set of answers to the difficulties.

So, as Mayors, Town Clerks and City Managers as we gather here the destiny of cities and towns across the region is before us. The decisions we make to collaborate and share ideas and approaches and develop meaningful answers to our common problems in local government and managing cities will go a far way in determining the character, strength and health of our cities and towns.

The cities and towns of our region are born out of somewhat similar experience, interactions and historical context. We can say we have shared experiences and shared meanings of the past. As Caribbean people we are a creating and imaginative people with a rich and unique cultural heritage and fascinating history. We are blessed with many natural formations which make our cities and towns quite attractive. Sharing our experiences, approaches, challenges and solutions can only serve to strengthen and enhance the health of our cities and towns and municipalities that will take our existence into future generations.

Our creativity,music, the arts, our culture, our edge in entertainment and sports and natural formations must provide the platform to grow the economies of our cities, towns and municipalities. Take the entertainment industry, it must become a principal driver of the economies of many cities, towns, and municipalities across the Caribbean region. We must work together, share ideas and experiences in laying the framework within which the entertainment and creative industry can flourish. We must encourage the creation of entertainment products that have international and regional appeal. We must work together to bring order to this industry. This is a discussion that we can mutually benefit from.

Public safety and security and public cleansing are major issues confronting cities across the region. We must together explore smart approaches to enhancing administration and control of critical centers across the Caribbean region.

We must also focus attention on our history and its use to promote our cities, towns and municipalities. In many cities across the region our history is lost and we do not see ouyr history as a vehicle to enhancing economic activity, creating jobs and fostering business opportunities. We must seek to create recreational and historical spaces across our cities and towns that have appeal to both citizens and visitors. There must be social spaces that allow for interaction between our people and visitors. The interaction with our culture and history. This must become a part of the architecture of our cities and towns. Our people and visitors must not escape our history.

So, as Mayors and local government practitioners let us explore and promote collaboration among our cities, towns and municipalities across the Caribbean region on issues and challenges affecting us and impacting the lives of people.. Let us ahre best practices and deepen our relationships at the municipal level. Let us commit to share ideas and develop approaches that will resolves many issues we are faced with. Let us,through meaningful dialogue and commitment to partnership create vibrant and prosperous economies. Let us together create a region at the level of local government that is strong, healthy, united, attractive and prosperous. Let us together as cities and towns across the Caribbean region become a major player at the level of local government on the Latin American Landscape.

As Mayor of Kingston. I do declare the inaugural Caribbean Conference of Mayors (CCM) in the Capital City of Kingston, this Day of April, 2018 Now Open