

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**SIGNING OF TOURISM COOPERATION
AGREEMENT WITH CUBA**

FEATURE ADDRESS

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE GERALD HADEED
MINISTER OF TOURISM**

Date: Tuesday March 31, 2015

Venue: Cuba

Time: To be determined

- The Honourable Manuel Marrero Cruz, Minister of Tourism in Cuba
 - Her Excellency Dr. Jennifer Jones-Kernahan, Trinidad and Tobago's Ambassador to Cuba
 - His Excellency Mervyn Assam, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary with Responsibility for Trade and Industry at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
 - The Cuban Official Delegation
 - The Trinidad and Tobago Official Delegation
 - Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen
 - Members of the Media
-

This is, indeed, a very auspicious and significant moment in the development of relations between our two (2) countries. It is a day that will be marked as a milestone in the growth of the excellent relations between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and that of Cuba.

On behalf of the Government and People of Trinidad and Tobago, I warmly welcome this new tourism cooperation agreement as it signifies a new and historic venture which will further boost and diversify the tourism industry in both countries. We have made a commitment to mutual exchanges, among other things, in scientific and technical research, and programs and projects in areas of cultural and natural heritage.

Some of the activities that will be undertaken under this agreement include:

- Official visits
- Participation in tourism fairs and training programs in hospitality

- Exchanges and visits of professionals, specialists or experts in technical and scientific matters, as well as in the administration and management of development projects.

This agreement has crossed cultural, language and political barriers in the interest of positioning **the tourism sector as the catalyst fuelling the critical thrust towards economic diversification**. This is all being done in recognition of the propensity of the tourism industry, in both countries, for job creation, foreign exchange earnings and poverty alleviation.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has had formal diplomatic relations with Cuba since 1972 and has recognised Cuba as a key strategic partner within the Caribbean region. Bilateral relations between Trinidad and Tobago and Cuba have blossomed since the opening of embassies in the capitals of both countries, and the signing of several cooperation agreements in areas such as trade, sports, medicine and the waiver of visas.

It is, within this context, that Trinidad and Tobago recognised the need for engaging Cuba on tourism development. The signing of this agreement, therefore, manifests the maturity of the relationship between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and that of Cuba.

For our twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the majority of our overseas visitors come from the United Kingdom, North America and Mainland Europe.

While this is expected to continue, it is important that we expand our focus beyond these markets and look to the long-term opportunities presented by new tourism markets, such as Latin America, which we believe will play an increasingly important role. This tourism co-operation agreement presents an avenue for securing greater airlift and arrivals from these new markets when a strategic partnership is developed with Cuba for multi-destinational marketing initiatives. This would enable visitors from overseas markets to buy vacation packages to visit various destinations in the Caribbean, including Trinidad and Tobago and Cuba.

A Joint Committee will be established to ensure that the terms of this Agreement are applied. In this regard, the upcoming Fitcuba 2015 trade fair will provide the ideal forum for travel and tourism service providers, from both countries, to facilitate further dialogue in the development of the areas outlined in the agreement and, most importantly, share knowledge and best practices from their respective tourism industries.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank the Government of the Republic of Cuba for its enthusiasm and steadfast desire for the establishment of a Tourism Co-operation Agreement between both of our countries.

It would be remiss of me if I did not also acknowledge the efforts of Trinidad and Tobago's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary with Responsibility for Trade and Industry, His Excellency Mervyn Assam, and Her Excellency Dr. Jennifer Jones-Kernahan, Trinidad and Tobago's

Ambassador to Cuba, for their expert technical expertise in the development of this tourism cooperation agreement.

We are always looking for innovative ways to make the most out of new tourism opportunities and we feel this partnership with the Government of Cuba is a fantastic fit and would certainly benefit all parties involved.

I am really looking forward to working more closely with my fellow Minister of Tourism in Cuba, the Honourable Manuel Marrero Cruz, on implementing this very important and comprehensive Tourism Cooperation Agreement in our respective countries.

I thank you.

March 28, 2015