

**MINISTRY OF TOURISM**

**INSTALLATION OF THE  
BOARD OF THE TOURISM  
DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LIMITED**

**FEATURE ADDRESS**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RUPERT GRIFFITH  
MINISTER OF TOURISM  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**Date:** Wednesday November 17, 2010

**Venue:** Hyatt Regency Trinidad

**Time:** 10.30am

- Mr. Oswald Williams, Secretary for Tourism and Transportation, Tobago House of Assembly
  - Mrs. Melba Dedier, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism
  - Mr. George Stanley Beard and other Directors of the in-coming Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC) Board
  - Ms. Lara de Sonpere, TDC Corporate Secretary and other senior executives of the TDC and the Ministry of Tourism
  - Representatives of our Strategic Media Partners
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Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

We are here today at the dawn of a new era in our local tourism. We are at a stage in our tourism development where we must change the way we do tourism business.

There is no other way. It cannot be business as usual. This is a new age of economics, new media technology, new travel priorities, and new consumers.

As most of us know only too well, the tourism industry worldwide is facing perhaps its toughest challenges of the past half-century.

There is the immediate international economic crisis that has resulted in mounting unemployment in the major world economies. Climate change has also impacted upon the way people travel. We now have shrinking ice-caps, expanding deserts, ever prevalent floods, and erupting volcanoes.

The Caribbean tourism industry has been particularly hard hit. And this is also true of Trinidad and Tobago. The Air Passenger Duty (APD) has already resulted in a 12% reduction in visitors to the region since 2009 according to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO).

Indeed Germany is also looking at putting in place its own Airline Passenger Duty.

According to the UN World Tourism Organisation worldwide international tourist arrivals grew by 7% in the first eight months of 2010 compared to the same period of 2009. However the Caribbean (+3%) is showing a lower rate of growth.

Major hotel chains have been heavily discounting and hotel occupancy has hit an all time low. Indeed at one of our Tobago hotels only two (2) guests were reported for October 2010 and our tour operators have suffered as much as a 35% decrease in inbound tour business.

The remarkable resilience of the tourism industry is being severely tested. The present crisis is truly global and its parameters are unclear.

We need a different mindset... the industry demands a different mindset.

It is against this complex scenario that the new Board of the Tourism Development Company, headed by Mr. George Stanley Beard, enters.

I congratulate the Chairman of the TDC Board and the other nine (9) Directors on their appointment. Your appointment to the TDC Board is a splendid challenge; one that I trust you will give your total commitment and care.

These new TDC Board appointees bring a wealth of tourism and business experience which will provide a value added commercial and cultural leadership to the industry. They have the dynamism, experience and know-how to help develop and market Trinidad and Tobago's tourism product and improve the local tourism sector.

It is critical that this new TDC Board not shirk from its mandate, which is, to develop the tourism sector in a sustainable and responsible manner and deliver on the promise of this Government to encourage recovery, regain jobs and promote sustainable development.

Often times Trinidad and Tobago has been acknowledged as the best kept secret in the Caribbean. This is in spite of the fact that this country offers a wide variety of tourist attractions.

The priority for the TDC Board is to change that perception.

Trinidad and Tobago must become the destination of choice in the Caribbean through aggressive marketing, well-conceptualised branding strategies and creative product packaging.

I urge the newly appointed TDC Board members to forge strong public private relationships and work hand in hand with stakeholders. We must all put our shoulders to the wheel and work towards the development of our tourism industry.

Only in this way will we be able to identify specific solutions and actions; pinpointing the main directions to be taken. The only workable program for our tourism development must be based on the process of inclusiveness.

Moreover the Tourism Development Company must work extremely closely with the Department of Tourism of the Tobago House of Assembly to support that Department in the execution of its strategies for Tobago's tourism sector. Tobago has a different product to that of Trinidad; its tourism focus being for the traveller seeking respite in the serenity of its beaches and rainforests and simple lifestyle.

This Government is committed to re-positioning tourism as a truly strategic sector for economic growth. Since taking office in May 2010 this People's Partnership Government has made concerted efforts at confronting the serious challenges hindering our tourism development.

We now have a new National Tourism Policy which reflects the recognition by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago of the importance of this industry and its emphasis on sustainable development.

Some of our other achievements include the development of a One Year Tourism Action Plan, introduction of a national service quality process within the industry and an enhanced community tourism drive with an emphasis on people empowerment and ownership.

Upgrade work has also begun at our heritage sites, such as Woodford Square and Treasury Building, and major capital improvements are in gear at the Emperor Valley Zoo and our flagship Maracas Beach.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is just the beginning. We look forward to greater things as the Board gets into stride.

In closing, ladies and gentlemen, I look forward with great anticipation to working with the new Board of the TDC on important initiatives so that Trinidad and Tobago can grow and prosper with a sustainable tourism strategy.

There is much work to be done and I am confident that we have the right board, management and staff in place to do just that.

I am convinced that the people who form the Board of the Tourism Development Company will not shirk nor shrink from their mandate.

I thank you.

November 14, 2010