

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY
MASTER CLASS IN CULTURAL TOURISM**

AN ADDRESS

**MRS. MELBA DEDIER
PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF TOURISM**

Date: Tuesday February 08, 2011
Venue: Queen's Park Oval, Port of Spain
Time: 8.30am

- Mrs. Patricia Butcher, Executive Director of the Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute
 - Our Workshop Facilitators - Dr. Rebecca Finkel and Dr. Majella Sweeney, of Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, Scotland
 - Workshop participants
 - Members of the Media
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It is my great pleasure to open this Master Class in Cultural Tourism, on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, Dr. the Honourable Rupert Griffith. From a review of the agenda I am confident that workshop participants will have a hectic and exciting two days ahead, from two dynamic, highly qualified and experienced international experts.

The Ministry of Tourism is proud to support this program as it provides an understanding of the needs of the cultural tourist and the specific hospitality requirements for success. It is my hope that this workshop will identify approaches on how best to use our rich cultural diversity to brand Trinidad and Tobago as a tourist destination.

I commend the Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (TTHTI) for its strategic approach to the development of human resources capable of delivering quality products and services at international standards of excellence. The Master Class programs run since 2009 by the Hospitality Institute - *Events Management and International Protocol* - have all been well-supported by the hospitality and tourism sector as well as by the general public.

As a result of our checkered history Trinidad and Tobago offers a range of cultural experiences for the international and domestic visitor.

Our cultural heritage sets us apart from the rest of the Caribbean region, and plays a vital role in creating a point of difference for us as we navigate our way through these economically challenging and highly competitive times.

It is the “experiences” with our local customs and traditions and the community interactions that visitors take back with them. It is that spirit of innovation and creativity that has

made Trinidad and Tobago the Cultural Capital of the Caribbean, and given us recognition as the Home of Carnival and Steel Pan; Calypso and Chutney..... and so much more.

Our National Tourism Policy clearly enunciates government's commitment to the maintenance of cultural authenticity and the development of the talent, innovation and creativity of our people.

Indeed the Ministry of Tourism is currently working on a cultural tourism policy which will support the government's overarching policy framework for sustainable development, which clearly states that carnival, cultural diversity and festivals will constitute an anchor around which a significant, year round tourism industry can be developed.

Accordingly, the cultural tourism policy will provide the framework for the formulation of strategies to enhance the

integration of culture into the development of the local tourism industry.

The Ministry of Tourism, therefore, has engaged the Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism, tourism stakeholders and the myriad cultural organizations to safeguard, support and promote our cultural diversity. It is our intention to add value to our tourism offerings through innovative packaging and the revival of dying traditions, art and culture.

Moreover, we are seeking to use the cultural, historical and recreational assets of Trinidad and Tobago as anchors for the development of a highly differentiated and competitive tourism product.

This workshop today is therefore very timely. Culture, one of the largest and fastest-growing global tourism markets, is being used increasingly to promote destinations and enhance competitiveness and attractiveness. I hope the workshop will inspire us all to identify an agreed approach

to further developing Trinidad and Tobago as a major cultural tourism destination

In closing, ladies and gentlemen, I leave you with the notion that culture is at the heart of tourism. And concomitantly, tourism is a vehicle for the sustainable development of culture. As a country seeks to develop tourism, it is in fact developing its culture.

On behalf of the Honourable Minister of Tourism, I wish you an exciting and fruitful two days of learning, sharing and networking.

Thank you.

February 07, 2011