

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**STAR HOSPITALITY ASSURED
CERTIFICATION ACHIEVEMENT CEREMONY**

FEATURE ADDRESS

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

Date: Thursday April 09, 2015

Venue: Conference Room of the Tourism Development Company Limited

Time: 9.00am

- Mr. Umesh Rampersad, Chairman of the Tourism Development Company Limited
 - Mr. Keith Chin, Chief Executive Officer of the TDC and the TDC Team
 - Mrs. Samdai Rampersad, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and other senior executives from our Ministry
 - Ms. Bonita Morgan, Director of Resource Mobilisation and Development at the Caribbean Tourism Organisation
 - Industry Partners
 - Members of the Media
 - Other Specially Invited Guests
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Morning, neighbour, morning

Allow me to add my words of welcome to all and especially to the owners of the three (3) hospitality establishments that will receive Hospitality Assured certification this morning.

- Bayville Holiday Apartment
- Inni Citi Place Limited
- Villa de Rose Guest House Limited

Before proceeding further I must apologise for the absence of Senator the Honourable Gerald Hadeed, the Minister of Tourism, who regrettably could not be here today because of another pressing matter of state.

By virtue of our presence here today, I am confident that we are determined to accelerate the pace of transformation in our tourism sector, in every region of our country and among all our communities as we seek to realise its enormous benefits and significant value chain.

Whilst all of us desire to have increased tourist arrivals, greater levels of employment in the tourism industry, and improved contribution of tourism to the GDP (and rightfully see these as signs of success) we must also look at other ways of measuring the impact and success of tourism.

We need to evaluate the capacity of our tourism plans to embrace a greater level of community involvement and inclusiveness - *how many more marginalised people and communities we are bringing into the tourism mainstream*. We need to measure how successful we are at promoting responsible tourism – a tourism thrust that is socially, commercially and environmentally sustainable.

We especially need to look at our quality of service which the now highly discerning international visitor deserves and expects. Efforts geared towards improvement of our service quality excellence will, therefore, impact favourably upon our tourism sector.

Through advances in these strategic imperatives – greater inclusivity, greater sustainability and adherence to international quality standards – we will ensure that tourism benefits successive generations.

Tourism is earmarked as one of our seven (7) pillars for economic diversification. It is a key support sector precisely because of its ability to create jobs and earnings in communities throughout Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard, the **Ministry of Tourism is exploring ways of both harnessing the potential of tourism to transform the lives of people, and to seek effective ways of achieving positive transformation in the sector itself.**

The Hospitality Assured Programme, one of the many offerings under the Service, Training, Attitude, Respect (STAR) Programme, is just one way of developing skills, instilling a culture of service excellence, and, through its grading system, assuring quality of service and facilities therein achieving positive transformation within the tourism sector. Developed as a pilot in 2013, **this STAR initiative is aimed at charting a new course for the management of customer relationships and for effecting positive change in the tourism and hospitality sector in Trinidad and Tobago.**

In line with our efforts to build a competitive destination, the Ministry of Tourism and the TDC are continuing their work on improving infrastructure at our various sites and attractions. We are also working with other government ministries and state agencies in the infrastructural upgrade at our air and sea ports of entry.

Turning to the marketing of our destination, we are refining our marketing strategy to ensure that we have an amazing and unique variety of offerings to attract people to our shores. We need to tell our story in a way that excites them and ensure that the story reaches as many people as

possible, so that a visit to Trinidad and Tobago is something on everyone's bucket list.

Our marketing strategy will be aggressive, targeted and consistent. One thing we must come to terms with, though, is that our financial resources are limited ... and we need to use these limited resources better.

All of this will impact favourably upon the positive experience of our international visitors.

In closing, ladies and gentlemen, I must congratulate the first ever Hospitality Assured certified properties in Trinidad.

- Bayville Holiday Apartment
- Inni Citi Place Limited
- Villa de Rose Guest House Limited

This is indeed a wonderful achievement and augurs well for our local tourism sector.

Accolades must also be given to the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), which has licensed the Certification programme from the Hospitality Institute of the UK, and is spreading this invaluable business and service excellence initiative throughout the Caribbean Region.

I also wish to commend the TDC for its efforts in creating this strategic partnership and urge that the company works more closely with its stakeholders to push this much-needed programme.

Allow me to recognise the Small Tourism Accommodation Operators Association of Trinidad and Tobago (STAOTT) for its achievements over the years. With a mere seven (7) properties in its fold in 2008, STAOTT's membership has blossomed to twenty one (21) properties with a total room stock of 106.

Over fifty percent (50%) of its membership is now TTTIC certified ... and this drive by the Association towards improvement of their service levels, in line with world-class standards, must be applauded.

Indeed, the Small Tourism Accommodation Operators of Trinidad and Tobago is the first stakeholder grouping to be offered the opportunity to be Hospitality Assured. We are also proud to note that STAOTT's President, Mrs. Denise Aleong Thompson, has been recently elected Caribbean Vice Chairman of the Inter-American and Caribbean Network of Small Hotels. Congratulations.

STAOTT is well-advised to look beyond issues of compliance and seek out other innovative programs that will facilitate service excellence in business operations. It cannot just stop here.

Each one of us here today has a special role to play - in one way or another – in the future of tourism. Government cannot do it all.

We are all links between the success of tourism and the transformation of our economy. This puts a huge responsibility on our shoulders and the outcome of our actions will have a significant impact on the development of our tourism sector and of Trinidad and Tobago.

This year has been difficult and there have been challenges. However if we are open, opportunities arise out of challenges and there are a myriad of opportunities on the tourism horizon. Let us all work together to build a strong and sustainable tourism industry.

I thank each and every one of you for your ongoing support in collaborating with the TDC and our Ministry to build a strong and sustainable tourism industry and I look forward to our collective success in the future.

I thank you for your attention and may God continue to bless our Nation.

April 09, 2015