

2016



FEATURE ADDRESS

**Delivered by Mrs. Cecilia Greaves-Smith
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Tourism
Trinidad and Tobago**

**Launch of the Blue Flag Children's Activity Book
*Saving our Oceans with Samanta the Manta***

**Wednesday 4 May, 2016
National Library and Information System
Authority (NALIS), Port of Spain – Audio Visual
Room**

- **Mrs. Samdai Rampersad, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism**
- **Members of the Board of the Tourism Development Company**
- **Dr. Keith Gibson, Director, Asclepius Green, Local Coordinator for the Blue Flag Programme**
- **Representatives of the Blue Flag National Jury**
- **Mr. Keith Chin, Chief Executive Officer Tourism Development Company and Management of the Tourism Development Company**
- **Specially Invited guests**
- **Students and teachers**
- **Members of the media**

Good morning.

It is my pleasure to deliver the feature address on behalf of the Honourable Shamfa Cudjoe, Minister of Tourism, who unfortunately could not attend this morning's launch and sends her regrets.

Historically, tourism in Trinidad and Tobago has taken a back seat to other industries that have been thought to be more lucrative for the national economy. However, times have changed and the economy has changed and the tourism industry is now being thrust into the forefront as one of the key sectors for the achievement of much needed economic diversification.



As we look towards the tourism industry as one of the saving graces for the local economy, there must be a major shift, nationally, in the attitudes and perception of this burgeoning industry.

For a destination's tourism industry to flourish there must exist the full support and involvement of the national community. Every word spoken about the destination, be it locally or internationally, must promote the positive attributes of our destination; every interaction with a visitor must highlight the friendliness and accommodating nature of our people and most importantly there must exist a certain level of pride, appreciation and respect for our local sites, attractions, natural beauty and wildlife with which destination Trinidad and Tobago has been blessed.

According to *World Centric*, the effects of water, land and air pollution and other forms of environmental destruction are causing many species of wildlife to die one thousand times faster than their natural rate of extinction and other natural ecosystems are all threatened or on the verge of collapse.

Through the Blue Flag programme, the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Development Company have placed a greater focus on environmental conservation and on promoting the importance of developing a sustainable tourism industry. This shift towards sustainability is not

however an easy task as the concept of environmental preservation, locally, is not widely practised.

Working towards a sustainable tourism industry means that we all must own the responsibility of becoming environmentally aware. We need to educate ourselves and increase our understanding of the fragility of the environment and of the importance of its protection.

The development of the Blue Flag Children's Activity Book, *Saving our Oceans with Samanta the Manta*, is one of the Ministry and TDC's initiatives aimed at bringing about national change. By starting with our nation's youth, it is the hope that the pride and respect for what is ours will resonate in the minds of our youngest citizens.

Saving our Oceans with Samanta the Manta was designed to highlight the impact of littering on the environment, to raise awareness of endangered species within our eco-system and to highlight some of our local sites and attractions. As an endangered species, the main character Samanta the Manta Ray was chosen as the brand for this and other future educational initiatives under Blue Flag programme to highlight the ways in which we all affect the habitats of various species of wildlife.



To the boys and girls in the audience, as you work through your copy of the activity book, share what you have learnt with your parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and put your families to task to become more conscious of the environment and our surroundings. Encourage your friends and other classmates to adopt practices that help to protect rather than endanger and that allow us to keep Trinidad and Tobago beautiful.

Once again I thank you for providing me with the opportunity to address you this morning and do enjoy the remainder of your day.

Thank you.