

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**SECOND NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE
WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION**

UNESCO

REMARKS

**MRS. VIDIAH RAMKHELAWAN
PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF TOURISM
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

Date: Tuesday November 01, 2016

Venue: Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry & Commerce, Westmoorings

Time: 8.30am

Good Morning!

It is both an honour and a pleasure to be here representing the Minister of Tourism the Honourable Shamfa Cudjoe. Minister Cudjoe is out of the country and, therefore, unable to attend.

I would like to congratulate the co-organisers of this most important event:

- The Ministry of Education, the line Ministry for the National Commission of Trinidad and Tobago for UNESCO
- The National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago
- The Tourism Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago, and facilitated by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

Today marks a signal event, since you are gathered here to discuss the World Heritage Convention and its implications for Trinidad and Tobago as a signatory.

The Ministry of Tourism is pleased to be associated with this Workshop as one of the major benefits of well-maintained Heritage Sites is the particular appeal they have to attract an influx of tourists.

And the tourism industry worldwide has been experiencing heightened activity. According to the UNWTO, international tourist arrivals reached 1.2 billion in 2015. Never before have so many people travelled to so many places.

Few places on the planet have escaped the curiosity of the traveller, and few are now unreachable. Tourist arrivals at any destination creates jobs, business opportunities for small and medium enterprises, the renewal of urban and rural areas and, when properly managed, the preservation and promotion of a country's natural and cultural heritage.

The interaction between world heritage sites and tourism has been both dynamic and closely related since the beginning of the World Heritage Convention in the early 1970s. The reason is simply that these places are recognised by the international community as among the world's most valued and iconic destinations. They encapsulate the people and their stories; they are a window into their souls, helping visitors to understand other places and other times.

It is against this background that the significance of this workshop gains prominence. There is an opportunity here to engage stakeholders, raise awareness and advance the cause of our local sites that are already on the UNESCO Tentative List.

And while there are challenges to gaining the inscription of a world heritage site, we must look to the benefits and the recognition that our destination can gain from such an achievement.

At a time when there are ever increasing threats to natural and cultural sites, the workshop represents a significant occasion to empower stakeholders and interested parties to safeguard, protect, promote and transmit our heritage for future generations.

There can be no doubt that places of natural and cultural heritage including scenic landscapes and archaeological sites, make up a significant proportion of tourist destinations. Therefore the World Heritage Site inscription has a particular appeal to stakeholders in the tourism sector.

Ladies and gentlemen apart from the economic activity that can emerge from a heritage site there are also other benefits. World heritage gives societies a sense of identity. It connects people to their homes and to their histories, gives them links to their own countries and to the world.

This workshop provides an opportunity to take the status of our own Sites forward so that they can attain the protection associated with the inscription of World Heritage Site. There is much that the tourism industry would gain from such an achievement.

By your presence you have already indicated your interest in moving the necessary processes forward.

I would like to wish you the best in your discussions and deliberations at this workshop and I trust that you will find that you will find them useful.

I thank you.