

Salutations.

Permanent Secretary Vidiah Ramkhelewan

Parents and Teachers

Junior Minister of Tourism, Le Quan Pearie

Moderator, Mr. Selvyn Lewis

Facilitators:

- **Mrs. Lorraine Waldrop-Ferguson,**
- **Valmiki Maharaj (Lost Tribe),**
- **Roam TT (Nathan Greene and Carla Cupid),**
- **Tobago Waterholics, Lorraine Pouchet (TTITOA),**
- **Chef Adrian Cumberbatch (Cook Caribbean)**
- **Members of the Media**

Students of the following schools:

- **Manzanilla Secondary School,**
- **Cunupia Secondary School,**
- **East Mucurapo Secondary School,**
- **Success / Laventille Secondary,**
- **Bon Air Secondary School,**
- **Williamsville Secondary School,**
- **Naparima Girls' High School,**
- **Aranguez North Secondary School,**

- **Fyzabad Anglican Secondary School,**
- **Tranquillity Secondary,**
- **Servol**

All other students present

Ladies and Gentlemen

All protocols observed

Good morning young ladies and young men.

You are truly a beautiful sight this morning!

I welcome you to the Ministry of Tourism's first ever Tourism Youth Symposium "Sustainable Tourism Through Youth Involvement"

I am very pleased that the ministry has organized this conference that brings our youth together to deliberate on sustainable tourism.

This is a very exciting and much anticipated event for us as we get to show you, our young people, just how important you are to the sustained development of our tourism industry.

The tourism industry is a fun and exciting industry. Once you've joined you may never want to leave.

It is about getting to know the many unique aspects of our culture, our offerings and sites/attractions.

I appreciate all the students who have joined us here to share their insights and thoughts on the future of the tourism industry.

The Government, my colleagues at the Ministry of Tourism and tourism stakeholders believe that the future of tourism is in the hands of our youth.

Tourism is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Over the decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification globally.

Over 1.2 billion travels were recorded last year worldwide, which shows that there exist great potential that could be tapped into to bring prosperity to individuals and societies.

Commerce

The economic benefits of tourism to the Caribbean are unquestioned. Revenue. From expensive five star hotels to the orange vendor on the street, the impact of foreign dollars exalts our tourism attractions as national treasures.

Our government's coffers directly benefit from each and every welcomed visitor. Not only does tourism raise tax revenues, it creates jobs as well. The benefits trickle down to service providers of all kinds such as restaurants promoting local cuisine and even the farmers who supply them with fresh produce.

Jobs

Hosting our guests creates significant employment and economic activity_ farmers, fishermen, doubles vendors, cooks, shopkeepers, bartenders and tour guides, banks, and resorts as well as carnival bands, entertainers, immigration, etc. Simply put, tourism affects the livelihood of everybody in Trinidad and Tobago, creating an enormous value chain.

It's not simply about the major players in the industry. The small man benefits as well. To cite one example, Jamaica's Sandals Resort Farmers Program grew in 1996 from 10 farmers supplying two hotels to 80 farmers in 2004 supplying hotels island-wide. Sales increased from \$60,000 to \$3.3 million in just 3 years, while the hotels received higher-quality produce for less than it would cost to import.

Hotels that buy local produce, decorations and furnishings set themselves apart and provide unique experiences, encouraging longer stays and possibly entire vacations.

Infrastructure

Accommodating tourists requires huge investments in infrastructure. This is not simply limited to hotels and resorts, but also public facilities and institutions as well. Power plants, water treatments plants, Ports, airports, sporting facilities.

With the latest developments in sporting infrastructure (swimming complex, stadium, tennis) Trinidad and Tobago is poised to benefit from the Sport Tourism Industry, a growing market in the country.

2016 arrivals data has revealed that...% came for sports and leisure. That represents a ...% increase from the year prior.

Such developments indicate that sport tourism, and tourism as a whole, is a viable income-generating option, which, if strategically pursued, could bring vast sums into the coffers of our country.

It is therefore vital that the development of the tourism industry be of top priority, as we focus on economic expansion and diversification.

The government has recognized the need for a renewed, deliberate, and concentrated focus on tourism, and has decided to reconfigure its tourism arsenal and reengineer its strategy. We look forward to the development of new entities geared at enhancing our tourism performance, raising the quality and quantity of our tourism assets, and improving the attractiveness and competitiveness of destination.

Moreover, against the backdrop of our challenging economic reality, we have no choice but to develop the tourism sector so that it would be able to generate the much needed foreign

revenue to our coffers, provide entrepreneurial opportunities for small operators, foster balanced development, and empower rural communities, youth and women.

This reengineering of the sector calls for stronger partnerships and more meaningful collaboration. It calls for government to redouble its efforts in investing in the sector, it calls for private sector to strengthen its networks, it calls for tourism stakeholders to graduate into tourism shareholders...and most importantly for you, citizens of this country to assert yourselves as proud patriots, builders of your community, protectors of your environment, preservers of your heritage, keepers of your traditions, promoters of the tourism sector, and ambassadors of this great nation.

We have our work to do, and so do you.

This paradigm shift that is required, for Trinidad and Tobago to simply stand in the same race as our competitors, doesn't allow us the luxury of hiding behind our smartphones or computers texting "wha d government doin? Fire d minister!?" It doesn't allow us the comfort of sitting idly by saying, "Barbados does it better."

This tourism metamorphosis for which we clamor calls for a radical change in perspective, perception and posture. A complete 180, a change in our culture...how we see ourselves, how we treat each other, how we embrace tourism, and the kind of prominence that we give to advancing the industry and truly sustaining the sector.

Who better to serve as agents of change than you, leaders of tomorrow, innovators of today...Our youth represent our hope for the future.

We at the Ministry are mindful that youth participation is crucial to the growth and sustainability of the sector. It is in this light that we've executed school caravan, blue flag educational programme, fcca essay writing, cto essay writing competitions. We've also had for the first time a junior Minister of tourism responsible for promoting youth involvement in development of the sector, and who leads the charge at the first and only secondary school tourism club at Manzanilla.

And today we make even greater strides to educate and incorporate our youth by providing first hand access to some of the most influential young movers and shakers in the tourism industry, who have been blazing the trail and changing the game

through technology, entrepreneurship, arts and culture and other offerings in the sector.

Tourism has opened doors for hundreds small business owners, from doubles vendors, to handicraft workers, wire benders, entertainers, taxi-drivers and the list goes on.

And over the years, technology has expanded the possibilities and opportunities affiliated with the sector.

The advancement of technology has truly revolutionized the travel and tourism sector. Making the virtually impossible possible and making tourism more dynamic than ever.

Technology has created a global village, connecting everybody to everyone, everywhere, allowing us to overcome the limitations of physical distance through our finger tips, presenting countless

opportunities for the travel and tourism industry to advance.

We've grown accustomed to spending millions to travel to trade shows, meet, greet and do business with foreign stakeholders, and make contact with international travelers...today we can do the bulk of our work through technology and new media.

Breakthroughs in digitalisation have given travelers independence and choice like never before. Connecting – places, people, experiences and memories.

Social media has changed the game, and you, our youth, champions of new media have a critical role to play in marketing and promoting our tourism.

Go Trinbago App

Over 70 countries

Over 6000 downloads

The winner of Barbados youth tourism competition presented on an app for Barbados very similar to ours. Our countries are taking note and doing the same.

Developed by our youth

Trinidad and Tobago is a melting pot of food, festivals, arts, culture, music, religions, and traditions... we have a duty to guard and protect, but we also have a duty to build and expand.

As I close,

The T&T tourism Industry now demands more meaningful

involvement and a more responsible and sustainable approach. We must build local capacity, by ensuring participation by all . From our major tourism institutions to the average person. Our tourism is our business

Everyone has a role to play in creating a premier tourist destination. This vision is born out of the recognition of the dynamic nature of the global tourism environment today. This critical concept calls for a coherent, comprehensive partnership between the public and private sectors, as well as the Trinbagonian people, to ensure benefits for all.

All in all, both government and industry must work together to overcome a number of challenges to ensure that maximum

benefits to the economy and society are achieved, in a way that is viable and sustainable in the long term.

You are critical to this strategy

You hold the future of this industry in your hand

And we stand ready to prepare you to lead the charge

Thank teachers, parents, students and everyone who contributed to making today's event possible.

I hope that you discover and embrace new and exciting things about the industry. And we hope you leave more energized, more educated, more willing, more ready, to work, to build, to make Trinidad number one, a reputable premiere tourism destination in the region.