

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**OFFICIAL INSTALLATION CEREMONY
BOARD OF THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
COMPANY LIMITED (TDC)**

FEATURE ADDRESS

**THE HONOURABLE SHAMFA CUDJOE
MINISTER OF TOURISM
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

Date: Thursday November 12, 2015

Venue: Level 9 Conference Room, Tower C, International Waterfront Centre

Time: 2.00pm

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- Mrs. Cecilia Greaves-Smith, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism
 - In-Coming Chairman of the Board of the Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC) and the other appointed Directors
 - Mr. Keith Chin, Chief Executive Officer of the TDC
 - Mrs. Alicia Cabrera, Senior Marketing Manager of Caribbean Airlines
 - The Management Teams at the Ministry of Tourism and the TDC
 - Partners and friends from the tourism industry
 - Our Strategic Media Partners
 - Ladies and gentlemen
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This afternoon, we are gathered here for the inauguration of the new Board of Directors for the national tourism marketing agency the Tourism Development Company Limited. The company charged with the mandate to develop and market Trinidad and Tobago's tourism product and improve the local tourism sector.

The new Board I am announcing today comes at a time when Government has decided that, given the given the uncertain global economic environment, a decisive effort must be made to shift economic strategy to encouraging substantial economic diversification. This Government is focused on investing in sectors that could generate significant economic activity and robust revenue streams to advance the economic agenda of the country.

In recognition of the importance of the tourism sector to this diversification effort, my priority as Minister of Tourism is to ensure that we have the right structures in place to explore the possibilities and maximize the full potential of this crucial sector.

The TDC must, therefore, take its rightful place as a key engine of change; transforming our local tourism sector and showing the world what our twin island state has to offer.

It is my hope that this Board, with its new energy and a more focused strategy would ensure that the TDC is ready, willing and able to fulfill its mandate, raise the profile of the destination and the destination, and last but by no means least, deliver to the people of Trinidad and Tobago “value for money”.

This transformation must be driven by a Results Based Management Framework which demands continuous performance monitoring and reporting so that our success stories can be truly assessed and weaknesses identified. The TDC must comply with the requirements as designated under the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual and stringently follow standard procurement procedures for the acquisition of goods and services.

The role of the Ministry of Tourism to provide oversight and develop policy is pivotal. As Minister, I will develop and maintain a close, cordial and professional relationship with the Board.

This will be in addition to the Chief Executive Officer of the TDC meeting with the Ministry's Permanent Secretary and its Accounting Officer on a regular basis.

Mindful of the need to appoint men and women of integrity who have made significant accomplishments in their own rights, and are competent and innovative thinkers as well as to have fresh minds to induce new thinking to steer the Tourism Development Company going forward. I have, therefore, appointed the board as follows:

- Chairman – Dennise Demming

Directors

- Frederica Brooks-Adams
- Tonya Laing
- Davlin Thomas
- Eric Taylor
- Dennis Sammy
- Richard Duncan
- and
- Sherry Katwaroo-Ragbir

I wish to heartily congratulate all the Board appointees, but must also hasten to stress that I will insist that all the Directors perform to the code and conduct as outlined by the Ministry of Finance.

Under the astute and dynamic leadership of Chairman Dennise Demming, it is our hope that the profile of Trinidad and Tobago will be elevated. There are four (4) major areas that require the critical attention of the TDC namely:

1. **Improving engagement with stakeholders** – we have to get things done instead of simply talking about things. So I expect to see more task-oriented working groups on specific issues and better project planning.

2. **Targeted consistent and innovative marketing approach**
- The TDC cannot take a business as usual approach especially in our marketing of destination Trinidad and Tobago. A change in the way we do tourism business is needed in order to strengthen the local tourism sector and attract even more visitors to enjoy this beautiful land we call home. We cannot continue to do what we have been doing over the years. It did not work then ... and it will not work now. It is not really simply about the size of your marketing budget but rather the creativity and soundness of your marketing programs that will determine a destination's success story.

3. **Upgrade our sites and attractions.** Trinidad and Tobago definitely has a lot to offer but we must refurbish our tourist sites to the highest standard possible so as to compete with the best the world has to offer.

Visitors expect basic amenities such as restrooms and signage and this must be delivered in the shortest possible time.

To differentiate Trinidad and Tobago as an attractive Caribbean tourism destination, we must deepen our collective efforts to create novel and interesting tourism products. There is also significant potential to expand our calendar of sports and cultural events.

4. **Service ... service ... service.** Tourism being a frontline service sector needs to lead the way when hospitality matters most. We need to render quality services and standards to our visitors. Therefore, focus must be on the continuous training of our country's human resources so as to become a leading tourist destination. It takes a commitment to outstanding service – the kind that people go back and tell their friends about.

Moreover, the Ministry of Tourism is setting the stage for the revitalisation of our tourism industry by creating the right policy and legislative framework for the sector. Within a month, we will have established the Trinidad Tourism Standing Committee comprising strategic business and tourism thinkers and leaders. This Committee will provide input in the shaping of strategic policy directions for the tourism industry as well as addressing issues affecting the operations of the sector.

Whilst this Standing Committee is in place, the Ministry of Tourism will continue having its Stakeholders' Forums on a quarterly basis to stimulate more ideas and initiatives to sustain the growth of our local tourism sector.

So Government will play its part but we know that the real key to making Trinidad and Tobago's tourist industry flourish lies with industry itself and the businesses, organisations and communities at its heart. **Our intention is to have communities and the industry itself take greater control of tourism development.**

Before I conclude, ladies and gentlemen, I must once again congratulate the In-coming Chairman and Directors of the Board of the TDC on their appointment. I applaud your commitment to serve your country.

Rest assured that the Ministry of Tourism will provide whatever tools and resources are necessary for effective discharge of your duties. **In return I expect results and delivery to our people, and performance firmly entrenched in the rubric of good governance.**

Even as we contemplate the challenges faced by our tourism industry, let us also draw inspiration and encouragement from the opportunities that lie ahead.

A lot can be achieved through the collective effort and commitment of the tourism industry, workforce and government coming together to create new products, better service and reaching out to a more global market.

I remind the newly appointed TDC Board Members to forge strong public-private relationships and work hand in hand with the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) and other tourism stakeholders. It is only by working together that we will all succeed.

May God bless our nation Trinidad and Tobago.

Enjoy the rest of the day.

November 10, 2015