

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**OPENING CEREMONY FOR
TTHTI'S SPORT TOURISM
MASTER CLASS**

OPENING REMARKS

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

Date: Thursday October 13, 2016
Venue: Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre
Time: 8.00am

- Dr. Patricia Butcher, Executive Director of the Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (TTHTI)
 - Professor Daniel Funk, School of Sport, Tourism and Hospitality Management at Temple University
 - Executives and Representatives from the various tourism organisations
 - Participants of the Sport Tourism Master Class
 - Specially Invited Guests
 - Members of the Media
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Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my distinct pleasure to warmly welcome you to the Sport Tourism Master Class Program offered by the Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (TTHTI).

This program is extremely timely; coming after the recently concluded International Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in August of this year and followed by the Paralympics in September. Sport is definitely on the minds of both the national and international community.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in its diversification thrust, has identified the tourism sector as critical to the achievement of economic growth.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is generally acknowledged that sport tourism is big business, in fact, sport tourism is said to be worth US\$600 billion

globally, according to research from World Travel Market. This particular niche market accounts for 14% of overall international travel and tourism receipts and this is predicted to grow over the next decade.

Sport tourism, therefore, presents a significant opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago to earn revenue and much needed foreign exchange, as well as, provide our citizenry with the opportunity to build on their entrepreneurial skills. We also stand to gain the international recognition, prestige and high international media coverage which comes from hosting successful sporting events.

This media coverage will usually cover not only the sporting event but also showcase the cultural heritage and sites and attractions of the country and overall what makes the host country unique and interesting for visitors to return to this destination.

Arguably, many tourism destinations can boast of having the appropriate sporting infrastructure and facilities, diversity of sports activities, and accommodation to capitalise on this global opportunity.

However, what will separate the “game players” are events that will deliver sustainable economic, social and promotional benefits that entwine the sport, heritage and culture of the destination.

It is against this background that the Ministry of Tourism has identified sport tourism as one of its key tourism niches and has drafted a preliminary sport tourism policy to guide development in that area. We continue to

collaborate with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago as we seek to finalise this policy in Fiscal 2017. It is to be noted that the Policy will be informed by views of all major stakeholders.

A major initiative of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has been the opening of the new aquatic swimming complex, located at Balmain, Couva, on September 30 this year.

This aquatic centre, the only one of its kind in the English-speaking Caribbean, will provide Trinidad and Tobago with the capability to not only attract and host international aquatic events, but also to nurture and develop nationals in a wide range of aquatic sports, using world class facilities. The aquatic centre will complement the range of stadia and sporting complexes that make up Trinidad and Tobago's landscape to support a wide array of events throughout the year. This presents a tremendous opportunity for business, both large and small, to capitalise on this market.

The Sport Tourism Master Class is therefore an important initiative to build capacity and develop the sport tourism niche. Over the next two (2) days the TTHTI, the leader in tourism and hospitality education, will be working with you to develop the skill sets necessary for Trinidad and Tobago to excel in the sport tourism arena.

We need to hone our skills and develop relevant strategies if we are to position ourselves as a leading sport tourism destination.

The sport tourism market is very competitive, but ladies and gentlemen, with sporting legends such as Hasely Crawford, Ato Boldon, Dwight Yorke and Brian Lara (*just to name a few*) and current sporting heroes Keshorn Walcott, and Paralympic athlete Akeem Stewart, we have declared to the world that we have the ability to succeed.

In addition, having hosted various local and international, sporting events, we have demonstrated that we have the capacity to use the sport tourism niche to transform Trinidad and Tobago into one of the world's most sought-after sporting destinations.

As I conclude I use this opportunity to urge all participants to utilise this valuable opportunity to the maximum and I do wish you all a productive, enjoyable and most successful Sport Tourism Master Class program.

October 13, 2016