

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

**PRIZE PRESENTATION &  
CLOSING CEREMONY OF  
TOBAGO INTERNATIONAL CYCLING CLASSIC**

**FEATURE ADDRESS**

**THE HONOURABLE SHAMFA CUDJOE  
MINISTER OF TOURISM**

**Date: Sunday October 04, 2015**

**Venue: Cycling Village Compound, Crown Point Beach Hotel Grounds**

**Time: 4.30pm**

- The Honourable Darryl Smith, Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs (Tentative)
  - Mr. Keith Chin, Chief Executive Officer Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC)
  - Mr. Jeff Charles and the other Members of the Management Team of the Tobago International Cycling Classic
  - Representatives from the Tobago House of Assembly
  - Cyclists and Supporters of the Game
  - Event Sponsors
  - Other Specially Invited Guests
  - Members of the Media
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Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a real pleasure to be here with you today for the Prize Presentation and Closing Ceremony of this year's Tobago International Cycling Classic.

Iconic world leader Nelson Mandela once said *“Sport has the power to change the world...it has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers...”*

A powerful statement from one of the most forward thinkers in the world; sports has an extraordinary power to bring people together, to affect positive change, and to inspire. Sports also have a tremendous positive impact on the tourism economy.

Hundreds of people from all corners of the globe saw the very best that the sport of cycling can offer over the last six (6) days in scenic and serene Tobago. A five (5) stage international cycling event that started in 1986, the Tobago International Cycling Classic has grown from strength to strength to become one of the more popular international sporting events hosted in Trinidad and Tobago.

This year's cycling tournament attracted over 200 competitors coming from over 21 countries in the Americas, Europe and the Caribbean. Moreover, the tournament drew enthusiastic fans that seek the spills and thrills of the game in destinations of fantastic natural beauty, pristine terrain and exhilarating fun. And my island home of Tobago perfectly fits the bill.

Sport has an intrinsic value - the very simple acts of participating, competing and spectating form an important part of our joie d'vivre culture.

Our sports, such as the “lovely” game of cricket, football, athletics and netball, are national passions. But sports are also good commercial assets as they generate revenue and provide employment.

But sport is also about so much more.

Sport teaches us incredibly important lessons about life. It teaches us about the joy of triumph, but also about learning to be resilient when we lose, and to lose with grace. Consider for a moment what the average cyclist had to endure to get to this competition ... never mind win a medal. The average cyclist has been working towards their goal for several years. And often times, the difference between winning and losing is keener than a razor’s edge.

It is for this very said reason that all competitors in this Cycling Classic are all winners.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sports tourism is a promising niche market for Trinidad and Tobago and can be an important leverage for pulling mega events here. Our tourism data (*collected from the Immigration Division*) indicate that on average one percent (1%) of the total visitor arrivals to Trinidad and Tobago are specifically for sporting activity. For 2014, the data reflects an increased percentage of visitor arrivals related to sporting activity to the destination from one percent (1%) to two percent (2%).

Trinidad and Tobago has a competitive advantage in sports tourism given the quality of our stadia and sporting facilities, myriad of sporting activities available here, overall warm climate and the strong brand recognition of our sporting brand ambassadors.

I am sure those of us gathered here this evening will recall – with fond memories - some of Trinidad and Tobago's great cycling pioneers such as Roger Gibbons, Fitzroy Hoyte, Leslie King, Gene Samuel, Ian Atterly, and Tobago born Emile Abraham as well as the up and coming stars in Elijah Green, Njisane Phillips and Quincy Alexander. All of them have put Trinidad and Tobago on the global map as a significant force in the cycling fraternity.

My Ministry is presently finalising its sport tourism policy in collaboration with the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs and the range of stakeholders so as to provide a framework for the future growth of the sports tourism niche in Trinidad and Tobago. The development of this niche can stimulate employment and increase foreign exchange earnings. Sport tourism development in Trinidad and Tobago will also promote further infrastructural development and reduce the seasonality of the tourism product for the benefit of all citizens.

It is against this background that the Ministry of Tourism was quite pleased to support this signature event on Tobago's calendar. For sporting events, like the Tobago Cycling Classic, **we are pushing the message that Trinidad and Tobago can be a true centre of sporting excellence; hosting major events in a whole range of sports and offering world-class facilities for competition and training.**

This Government understands, as I know you do too, the huge economic benefits that sport can bring to communities. The unifying force of sport is also critical for our vision of our twin island Republic as a place where people, cultures and ideas meet and flourish.

Rest assured that we will continue to look for opportunities to both grow tourism and develop sport in Trinidad and Tobago by supporting major events with real overseas revenue-generating potential.

As I close, I congratulate the organisers on what I understand has been a hard but extremely fun event.

I also want to invite the foreign athletes among us to spare some time out of their busy schedules to visit the sites and attractions around the island; if you have not done so already.

So thank you once again. God Bless.

October 02, 2015