

2016



WELCOME REMARKS

**Delivered by Mr. Warren Solomon
Chief Executive Officer (Ag.)
Tourism Development Company Limited**

**Launch of the Tourism and Health Programme
23rd September, 2016
9:00am
Ruby/Sapphire Room
Hyatt Regency Trinidad**

- The Honourable Shamfa Cudjoe, Minister of Tourism
- Mrs. Vidiah Ramkhelawan, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism
- Mr. Richard Duncan, Chairman of the Board of Directors and other Board members of the TDC
- Dr. Lisa Indar, Director Tourism & Health Programme, CARPHA
- Mr. Tomas Bermudez, Country Representative, Inter-American Development Bank
- Mr. Brian Frontin, Chief Executive Officer, Trinidad Hotels Restaurants and Tourism Association
- Mrs. Tenisha Brown – Williams, Industry Standards Specialist, TDC
- Management and Staff of the TDC and Ministry of Tourism
- Heads of Tourism Stakeholder Organisations
- Industry Partners
- Specially Invited Guests
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning.

It is my pleasure to warmly welcome you to the launch of the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism and Health Programme. I look forward to these milestone occasions because I am always excited to be a part of the progressive steps made by Trinidad and Tobago's tourism industry.

Global tourism is rife with opportunities and is projected to experience growth over the next few years. However, the increase in communicable diseases like the myriad mosquito-borne illnesses currently being battled by the region threatens to derail us from gaining from this industry growth. As a result, we have to ensure that our visitors can freely, comfortably and safely visit our shores.

As you will learn this morning, the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism and Health Programme will allow us to monitor and address health and safety incidents as they occur and in many cases will allow us to pre-empt their escalation.

At this time, I take the opportunity to thank the Caribbean Public Health Agency for working with us at the TDC, the Ministry of Tourism and the THA to develop and roll out the programme for Trinidad and Tobago. We are excited about it and the Tourism Development Company is committed to doing our part to ensure standards of safety, quality and excellence are achieved in our national tourism industry. The Tourism and Health Programme now forms a large part of these efforts.

Each of you is here today either because you have directly or indirectly impacted the development of the programme or you will

be affected or impacted by its implementation. The success of this programme requires the full participation of our tourism stakeholders and your commitment to ensuring the safety of all visitors as a priority.

One other area that we at the TDC sometimes grapple with – and it's something that we firmly believe requires a meeting of the minds and further collaboration – is how we communicate to our various publics about outbreaks of diseases in Trinidad & Tobago. We have long gone past the days when a media release or statement is confined to readers or listeners on our 2 islands. Every word uttered or photo posted here automatically becomes part of the global communications landscape. In the TDC's and by extension, the Ministry of Tourism's world, we receive requests from international media houses for official statements "by end-of-business" or "within the next hour" and so on.

Just last week, the TDC hosted the Society of American Travel Writers Freelance Council Meeting, where 33 journalists, photographers and bloggers from the US and Canada visited the 2 islands for a week – some are actually still here. However, one of the more consistently-asked questions as we were planning this event over the last couple of months was “What about Zika?” Our responses had to be very measured – and of course these were guided by statements from the Ministry of Health – because not only were these people concerned about their own well-being visiting a country where Zika is an issue, but as media representatives, they also influence where travellers choose to visit.

We must thank again, at this juncture, Dr. Karen Polson-Edwards from CARPHA, who delivered an excellent presentation on the topic to the group at one of their Professional Development

Seminars. In the minds of the SATW members, she was a true rock star!

As I close, I thank you for seeing the vision and the importance of this programme to the growth and sustainability of our industry. We can only become better and more competitive from here on.

Thank you.