

Draft Talking Points (Speaking Time – 3 to 5 Minutes)

Please recognize the following:

- **The Honourable Shamfa Cudjoe, Minister of Tourism**
 - **Dr James Hospedales, Executive Director, CARPHA**
 - **Mr Hugh Riley, CEO, Caribbean Tourism Organisation**
 - **Mr Frank Comito, CEO, Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association**
 - **Mr Julian Belgrave, COO, Trinidad & Tobago (T&T) IDB Country Office**
 - **Specially Invited Guests**
 - **Members of the Media (if present)**
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Good morning. I am pleased to bring remarks on behalf of the Minister of Health, the Honourable Terrence Deyalsingh, at this morning's signing ceremony. Unfortunately, because of a scheduling conflict, he is unable to accompany his colleague, the Honourable Minister of Tourism, at this important event.

First off, I want to congratulate CARPHA, the CTO and all those that contributed to making this signing ceremony. CARPHA, along with PAHO are the Ministry of Health's closest technical partners in public health. The IDB is currently assisting the Ministry of Health to improve its capacity to address NCDs.

Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the linkages between Health and Tourism and we were pleased to support CARPHA's application for grant funding from the IDB for the development of a health monitoring and response system and standards to enhance Caribbean Tourism and protect the health and safety of visitor and the local populations. Many Caribbean territories are dependent on tourism, and any public health concern can prove to be deleterious to our economies.

However, the tourism industry is vulnerable to health, safety and environmental problems that pose serious threats to the sustainability of Caribbean tourism industry and its economies. This project will address in a regional and collective manner the health, safety and environmental challenges affecting the sustainability of tourism and thereby contribute the Caribbean tourism and its economies being more sustainable, resilient and competitive.

We share the view that weak health monitoring/response systems, the absence of standards/certification and lack of training have contributed to the spread of

disease outbreaks and food safety issues in the region; and without adequate information management systems, standards and associated training, these gaps can prompt severe tourism crises. Evidence shows that health surveillance systems for travel/tourism, food safety training and standards implemented by public health agencies in other territories can reduce the spread and number of illness outbreaks, and improved food safety and environmental sanitation.

[You may wish to speak extemporaneously for a few seconds on Trinidad and Tobago's need for strengthened surveillance and information management systems – especially in light of the Zika virus and H1N1 – as well as other communicable diseases and NCDs]

In this regard, as one of the six beneficiary countries, Trinidad and Tobago is keen to work to implement the joint tourism and health initiatives developed under this project, including protocols, health information monitoring and response systems, standards, training and healthy workforce program as well as promote the development of joint policies for addressing the critical link between health and tourism.

In closing, the success of these, and future public health initiatives, is hinged upon the active participation and support of partners inclusive of governments, private sector, lending institutions and the citizenry. We have no greater priority than to do what we must to safeguard the health and wellbeing of our people. Thank you and all the best for a successful ceremony and roll-out of the programme.