



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Tourism

Speech by

Mr Richard Madray
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Tourism

At the

Trinidad and Tobago Tourism and Health Stakeholder
Meeting and Training Workshop

Kapok Hotel (Samaan Tree Room)
Port-of-Spain

Thursday 12th July 2018

9:00am

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Salutations to be confirmed

- Dr Rosham Parasram, Chief Medical Officer – Ministry of Health
- Dr Lisa Indar, Head, Tourism and Health Programme & Foodborne Diseases – CARPHA
- Dr Ayanna Alexander, Epidemiologist – CARPHA
- Mr Brian Frontin, Chief Executive Officer – Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants and Tourism Association (THRTA)
- Doctors, Heads and Staff of the Ministry of Health
- Heads and staff of the Ministry of Tourism
- Customs, Immigration and Port Authority personnel
- Representatives of the Tourism sector
- Specially invited guests

Good Morning

On behalf of the Ministry of Tourism and the Honourable Randall Mitchell, Minister of Tourism; I take this opportunity to welcome you all to today's meeting and training session.

It is rather interesting the direction in which our careers often take us. I say this because only last month I was the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health and today I stand before you as the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, at an event which seeks to promote the Regional Tourism and Health Programme (THP), under the auspices of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA). Therefore, I am fully cognizant of the importance of the collaborative work that must be undertaken to treat with the health impacts of tourist-receiving destinations, such as our Caribbean Region.

Two weeks ago, Minister Mitchell and I met with Dr Indar, who gave us a very comprehensive update on the THP and the challenges which Trinidad and Tobago – one of the eight participating Caribbean countries - has faced, in the implementation of this Programme, since its launch in September 2016.

Today's stakeholders' meeting is a direct result of Trinidad and Tobago's renewed commitment to the Tourism and Health Programme, through signed letters of support from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Tourism.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to share with you some facts from a June 26th 2018 release from the United Nations World Tourism Association (UNWTO). According to the release:

- International tourist arrivals grew 6% in the first four months of 2018, compared to the same period last year, not only continuing the strong 2017 trend, but exceeding UNWTO's forecast for 2018.
- International tourism continues to show significant growth worldwide, and this translates into job creation in many economies.
- This growth reminds us of the need to increase our capacity to develop and manage tourism in a sustainable way, building smart destinations and making the most of technology and innovation.
- Confidence in global tourism remains strong according to the latest UNWTO Panel of Tourism Experts survey. The Panel's outlook for the May-August period is one the most optimistic in a decade.

The facts are clear, ladies and gentlemen, tourism is big business. However, as you know, it is one of the most competitive business sectors worldwide. In addition, it is highly susceptible to external forces.

We need only recall the impact of hurricanes Irma and Maria on our Caribbean neighbours last year or the concerns caused by the Zika virus in 2016.

Internationally, the Caribbean Region is recognised as one of the most tourism-dependent regions in the world. For this reason it is imperative that we take all necessary precautions; develop and adopt innovative health and safety mechanisms; and conform to the strictest and highest health and safety standards to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago and the Region remain attractive travel destinations.

Participation in CARPHA's Tourism and Health Programme, enables tourism stakeholders and the country to benefit from improved health, food safety, security and environmental monitoring and threat-response.

Ladies and gentlemen, there can be no denying nor understating the fact that health concerns and a healthy environment are major tourism safety issues. Also embodied in the issue of safety is reputation and destination management. These factors are inextricably linked.

As one of the eight countries piloting the THP, Trinidad and Tobago does have some “catching-up” to do. I trust that this meeting and workshop will assist in helping to move us forward with implementing the THP.

Once again, I urge all stakeholders to take full advantage of the Tourism and Health Programme. As much as possible, let us stay ahead of those public health and safety threats over which we do have control. To quote a well-known saying, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

I look forward to hearing of the positive outcomes from today’s meeting. I wish you all a productive and rewarding day.

Thank you.