



## **Welcome Remarks**

**By**

**Ms Prabhawatie Maraj,**

**Deputy Permanent Secretary,**

**Ministry of Public Administration**

**at**

**RETURNING SCHOLARS SYMPOSIUM 2014**

**at the**

**Hilton Trinidad Hotel**

**Port of Spain**

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> August, 2014**

## **Salutations**

- The Honourable Carolyn Seepersad-Bachan – Minister of Public Administration
- Mrs Marcia McKellar – Director, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division
- Returning Scholars;
- HR Practitioners; GHRS;
- Members of the Media;
- Staff of MPA;
- Ladies and Gentlemen

As I look at you, I see the future of Trinidad and Tobago. Some of you have just completed your exams and maybe feeling a bit worn out. Others have completed their studies and have already been placed in agencies or are waiting to be placed. I want to congratulate all of you for successfully completing your programmes of study and are anxious to apply the learning you have acquired to contribute to the sustainable national development of our country.

In designing today's programme, we have thought about what can be done to facilitate your immersion, or in some cases, re-immersion into the world of work. You are all expected to perform and behave like the professionals you have been trained to be and to become, specialists in areas that are essential to our national welfare, wellbeing, quality of life and standard of living in the future. You are also expected to emerge as leaders in whatever field you choose or have chosen.

To do this effectively, you need to be equipped with techniques and strategies for undertaking successful interviews and performing effectively in the working environment. This does not only apply to those of you who are venturing into the work environment for the first time. These are skills you will require during the course of your career. At this event, you will be exposed to interviews that seek to determine your capacity and competency. I encourage you to not view these encounters as challenges, but as opportunities.

Some of you have impressive resumes, but there is a need to appreciate how to market yourself, depending on the employer. Today's programme is designed to give you an opportunity to hone your skills with the HR practitioners present. The mock interviews will assist you in understanding options that are available and how you can navigate your way towards finding job opportunities that may best fit your skills set and ambitions. It also affords you the chance to network with persons who are looking for prospective employees in your areas of interest.

In this context, I welcome representatives from the Service Commissions Department, HR Personnel from other public service agencies and the National Scholars Alumni Association of Trinidad and Tobago (NSAATT). They are all here to help and, in the case of the NSATT, to link you with other scholars who have also travelled this road. The NSATT network will provide peer level support and in the past has partnered with the SATD as a two way mechanism for sharing information and providing feedback.

This is an interactive symposium and I encourage you to find out as much as possible about what lies ahead. There will be presentations on topics that are important and opportunities to speak about your expectations and ask questions. There have been changes in terms of the policies that guide placement and employment of scholars, deferral, and obligatory service. There is an SATD information desk where you can go to get answers to any questions you may have, after the presentations have been completed. Within recent years, the Ministry has also offered Professional Development Programmes to scholars in its alumni pool with a view to helping participants define Personal Development Plans that identify the work place/career competencies that need to be addressed and strategies for improving those competencies. This is done in the context of having a coach/mentor that is assigned for a period of six months to assist in the development of the plan and monitor implementation.

Rest assured, the Scholarship Division and our Ministry as a whole are here to help you find a place and make a meaningful contribution to our national development.

I thank you.