



SPEAKING NOTES

THE HONOURABLE CAROLYN SEEPERSAD-BACHAN

MINISTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

MP FOR SAN FERNANDO WEST

AT THE 'GOLD TO DIAMOND' NEWS CONFERENCE

ABERCROMBY STREET ROOM, OLD FIRE STATION

PORT OF SPAIN

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Ministry of
Public Administration

Speaking Notes for Minister:

Thank you PS Macintyre. Let me add my personal welcome to all of you here today. We are pleased that you came.

The theme of this year's Public Service Week is "FROM GOLD TO DIAMOND" and PS has already given you a sense of what the GOLD stands for. Let me tell you a bit more about the DIAMOND and what it means.

But first, let's go back to the gold.

You must realize that the public service as we know it only started with Independence. In 1962 we had to change the way the service was structured and how it was oriented. We were self-governing but still ruled by Britain. The Civil Service functioned in the British, Colonial tradition. They were servants of the CROWN. Then 1962 came and in an extremely short space of time the focus shifted. A national public service was formed as the backbone of national development. Politicians and governments may come and go but the public service is what provides the stability, the sustainability and the continuity of Government. The fledgling public service has now grown considerably but what it is, what it stands for and what its primary purpose is, have not changed but has grown. Public servants have grown in stature as the public service has grown in strength and in numbers.

It is impossible to really appreciate how far we've come in those fifty years. The Indian Civil Service, for instance, started with the Emperors, then the British and later became truly Indian – but the tradition was there. We've had just 50 years. Locals took the reins of the administration of government and have ensured that this country has progressed.

The first thing we want to do in this 50th year is to recognize how far we have come as a Public Service and to reward 50 public servants who served with distinction in this critical period. They are the true gold, the solid gold, who are the foundation on which we will build as we go forward. It is altogether fitting and proper that we do so.

We have now reached the point, after fifty years, where we have the critical mass to better respond to the challenges that lie ahead. In a changing world you need to have at least one institution that provides the core of services that our citizens increasingly expect and will more and more demand. A birth certificate, a passport, good health service, proper housing and drainage are no longer gifts of a benevolent government but today they are rights.

Every citizen, and I include public servants, is a consumer of government services. Every citizen wants and deserves the

highest quality service in the shortest possible time and at the lowest possible cost.

How do we do this and when?

Public Service Transformation or Modernisation has already started. To use a popular phrase, it is not rocket science. It is building on the good things of the past and learning from the lessons of the past. It is scanning the environment of the future, figuring out what the demands and needs will be, and putting in place the organization that you will need to meets those demands and needs.

This is where the “Diamond” comes in.

Our Permanent Secretary, Miss Macintyre, will provide a brief explanation of how and why we arrived at the “Diamond” and I will then take it further.

PS PRESENTS SLIDE SHOW

This diamond structure that the PS revealed is what we call “Citizen-Centric” and will ensure that the Public Service is properly structured and staffed to fulfill its core purpose. We guarantee that when the legislation and all the other necessary building blocks are in place, all citizens, regardless of their age, gender, race, religion or geography will be able to access

public services with the minimum of inconvenience and the guarantee that these services will be provided in a courteous and timely manner.”

One of the points that I must make is that many people who are now performing low-level tasks are either qualified for work at the higher levels of the service or are prepared to undergo training to take advantage of the many opportunities for promotion now being opened up by the Government. It is clear from what we’re seeing that in the next ten years as we try to make the public service more citizen-centric we will require more delegation of authority and devolution of decision-making in the Public Service. This is a call which has been taking place for some time now. The diamond shape will allow devolution with proper accountability.

This requires strengthening the professional streams within the Public Service. The entry level will be Management Support Officers. This will be the avenue for upward mobility for secretarial and clerical officers and it will create the diamond shape that we have just presented as the architecture of the future – a small group of senior managers at the apex of the organisation, a large group of professionals in the middle and the managerial support officers leading to the professional level, thereby reducing the number of low-level jobs mainly because of the opportunities for advancement to the professional level.”

The highpoint of our 50th Anniversary celebrations of the National Public Service will be a GALA CEREMONY appropriately called “**FROM GOLD TO DIAMOND**” at which our Prime Minister will deliver the Feature Address. This will take place on Thursday July 12, exactly 50 days before our 50th Anniversary. 50 Public Servants will get awards for excellence in public service. These are unique and genuine originals. The Prime Minister’s participation in the ceremony is proof of the importance that she and the Government as a whole place on the GOLD and the DIAMOND.

We have one other surprise in store at that Ceremony. While we honour the Public Servants who brought us up to the GOLD standard, we are providing a preview of the DIAMOND. The first steps, so to speak, towards the future.

There are many examples of Ministries and Departments that have already started the Transformation process. Only the most biased observer will say that the Transformation has not already started. It has started and there is a lot of good work out there that delivers cheaper, faster, better and smarter services to our citizens.

Research is being conducted by the Ministry to ascertain the agencies that have improved their service delivery significantly.

We are going to hand out three DIAMOND awards to three (3) top Ministries for Excellence In Service Delivery this year. This is in keeping with the Prime Minister's mantra 'Delivery, Delivery, Delivery'. The awards consist of a trophy that is identical to the ones that will be given to the 50 outstanding public servants and a plaque that will have pride of place in each Ministry and replica plaques for branch offices. These will symbolize that the journey towards diamond has already started. From next year the Transformation Awards will become an annual feature and the form it would take as well as the criteria and categories will be discussed within the Government before being announced.

We see "Excellence" as a moving target, the better you get the greater the challenge.

Two other events being held are the 5K Walk/Run and an Open House, where all Ministries would participate. The 5K Run/Walk that will be held on Saturday, June 16, 2012 at the Queen's Park Savannah, starting at 3.30pm. Prizes of Units from Unit Trust will be given to the first three places in stipulated age categories. An OPEN HOUSE, will be held on the Brian Lara Promenade, starting on Monday, June 18th, 2012 and will run to Saturday, June 23rd, 2012, excluding Tuesday, June 19th, 2012, (Labour Day). Open House will take place in San Fernando on Wednesday, June 20th, 2012 (one day only); Tobago Ministries will be included on the Brian Lara Promenade. Each day different Ministries would be on display, with members of staff on hand to provide information to the public. On Saturday, June 23rd, 2012, which is celebrated as

Public Service Day internationally, the focus by the Ministries that day would be on Careers in the Public Service. I will take whatever questions you have.

Thank you – I will now hand you over to PS Macintyre to talk to you about the two other major events that will be the other highlights of our 50th Anniversary Celebration.