

OPENING REMARKS BY MRS. JOAN MENDEZ, PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AT THE HUMAN RESOURCE WORKSHOP, "COLLABORATING TO ACHIEVE GORTT HUMAN RESOURCE REFORM", HELD AT THE NATIONAL ACADEMY FOR PERFORMING ARTS (NAPA) OVER THE PERIOD FEBRUARY 1 TO 2, 2017

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be here today to speak to you on an area of which I am very passionate, and have spent my entire career seeking to promote and advance the human resource management system in the Public Service. I therefore wish to thank all of you for considering this event as important I do, by your very presence.

This Workshop marks an important milestone in the history of our Public Service as we move towards making significant changes in our HR System across the Public Service. We can all agree that the Public Service has in fact developed progressively over the years and that our Human Resource system has played a key function in its development.

Ladies and gentlemen, change is never easy, but it takes dedication and commitment to make this happen, this is clearly evident by such a distinguished audience of policy makers who sit at the helm of our HRM governance. There have been times when some of our systems might not have functioned at an optimal level, and those were the times when we sought to institute change. I do have to acknowledge some of the reform efforts that have taken place in our institutions history through the dedication of some very distinguished public officers. The J O'Neil Report (1964) focused on improvements in the training of personnel and also made recommendations for a schedule of salary ranges; the Administrative Improvement Programme (1972 – 1976) made a pioneering move by focusing on training of personnel in job analysis and evaluation, an area we have continued to focus on, as in 2014 job descriptions for positions within several streams of contract employment were standardised.

It was from 1984 – 1986 that the Public Service Review Task Force, headed by Mr. Reginald Dumas, made recommendations for the most effective use of existing manpower and resources. Suggestions were also made for the use of technology for information storage and retrieval, and for forging innovative partnerships between the public and private sectors. The latter is an approach that we have continued today, as evident by our collaboration with the University of

Trinidad and Tobago for the e-Based Competency Development Programme. It was not until 1992 that a holistic approach to HR transformation led by the late Gordon Draper, took place in HRM, which included staff appraisals and the decentralisation of functions and devolution of authority by the central human resource agencies.

My distinguished colleagues, we are seeing hints of areas that have been seen as significant, and we are here today to partner to advance even further, in order to be compatible with our progressively evolving environment. I acknowledge the work of our pioneer leaders and the current initiatives that are being undertaken. I am ecstatic that we are all here at the present time to initiate positive change to create a more meaningful human resource management system that is grounded in recognising our public service officer as the most important asset, and at the same time interlocking this with making Government the employer of choice.

Having said this, it is our responsibility to therefore forge the requisite strategic alliance as HR practitioners to deliver on Government's Vision 2030 through its theme of *Delivering Good Governance and Service Excellence* which seeks to improve governance, public management systems and processes, modernised infrastructure and operating environments. In particular, the theme also states that our public institutions will move towards a state that is more capable, professional and proactive in meeting the needs of its citizens. As a result there is a requirement for a comprehensive review of the public service HRM functions and institutions.

This, ladies and gentlemen, requires not just internal networking, but aligning ourselves with our external partners both within Trinidad and Tobago and as a region. As a member of the Caribbean Centre for Development Administration (CARICAD), we will be signatory to the Charter for Caribbean Public Services. This Charter has among its core pillars the areas of *Capacity Development* and *Openness* which are strongly aligned to the goals and intent of our drive toward human resource management reform. Allow me to highlight some of the core principles of these two pillars. They are:

- Competency based Human Resource Management and Development
- Leadership
- Organisational Management and Development

- Information and Knowledge Management
- e-Government

Our current efforts represent a comprehensive approach to HR modernisation strongly aligned to the tenets of the Charter and thereby our regional partners. I can clearly see that such partnerships can lead to greater information sharing and knowledge management, which will help to improve organisation performance of all partners. It is also applicable to our own local partnerships. With an efficient running HR system, there will definitely be improvements in the way government delivers on its services to these partners and its citizens. The delivery of government services lies not just in the continuous improvements in reform measures, but in a total and complete change in our attitudes, value system and the rebirth of leadership with enhanced foresight.

It is my heartfelt view that despite our current economic climate, a positive attitude can help cope more easily with the hurdles that sometimes come with the need for change to bring about success. The e-Based Competency Development Programme is intended to develop a scalable online training environment as an alternative to face-to-face professional development instruction. The Ministry of Public Administration and Communications has already rolled out the programme to four pilot Ministries, and will be continuing the roll out later this year. This initiative provides a holistic programme of training and development for secretarial, clerical and administrative staff through online delivery. This is another fine example of how partnerships can benefit us all, as we are partnering, as mentioned before, with the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). The initial modules focused on computer skills, business writing, customer service and supervisory skills. It should be noted that feedback from participants was generally very positive with 79% of attendees agreeing that the training material allowed them to improve their job performance.

Fellow colleagues, you would all agree that the work started by Mr. Dumas in job analysis did bring a greater degree of professionalism by our employees in delivering on Government's goods and services. The significant growth in persons employed on contract in the Public Service, from less than 200 in 1990 to more than 10,000 in 2010, led to a review of the system, processes and

procedures governing contract employment in the Public Service. This review resulted in the standardisation of job descriptions with respect to positions in the clerical, secretarial, manipulative, human resources, communications and legal streams, as well as the pre-determination by the Chief Personnel Officer of the salaries and terms and conditions of employment of such positions. I am happy to say that we are in Phase 2 of this exercise. This phase involves standardised job descriptions and designations in the areas of facilities management, procurement, monitoring and evaluation, project management, legal (central agencies) and information technology. Currently the job descriptions and Terms and Conditions of employment are being reviewed by the Personnel Department.

I would like to take the time congratulate all human resource management leaders for coming together to establish a community of practice, the *Human Resource Leaders Network Forum*, launched in June 2015. This Forum has actively been meeting to treat with HRM issues and standardising processes. It is progressing steadily to institutionalising agreed upon common procedures. I am pleased to say that it is supported by an IT platform which enables a single, secure and accessible repository for the upload and storage of information and ideas.

A key feature to a successful Public Service is a strong governance model that would result in sound decision making. The Institutional Strengthening of the Service Commissions Department, a collaborative effort with *Deloitte and Touche* and the *Institute of Public Administration Canada (IPAC)*, is therefore a critical element in enhancing improved quality service to its clients and stakeholders. A Project Steering Committee was established in March 2015 and aims to strategically reposition the SCD to provide quality HRM service delivery to its clients and stakeholders. It is the intended that through this initiative the Service Commissions Department will be strategically repositioned to more effectively contribute to improved service delivery to stakeholders. A core feature is that the Integrated Human Resource Information System (IhRIS) project team will participate with the Service Commissions Department to design training programmes, procedural manuals and to address performance issues affecting IhRIS.

Key to all of this, is a proper functioning Human Resource Information Management System which will lead to increases in efficiency when it comes to making accurate decisions in human

resource management. IhRIS holds the potential to enhance the capacity for impelling human resource management in the Public Service. The benefits to human resource management and by extension the delivery of services are:

- Better communication, integration and streamlining of HR processes.
- Greater variety and faster generation of HRM reports.
- Better decision-making based on consolidated HRM information.

IhRIS, I am pleased to say, is proposed for upgrade and it is intended that an IhRIS Human Resource Management Unit will be established to provide monitoring of HR processes. It is intended that nine modules would be used within the next three months which would include position management, workforce administration, absence management, performance management, training, health and safety, salary planning, integrated global payroll and employee self-service. In the medium term additional modules will be added to enhance HRM in the Public Service.

I hope that I have been able to put forward some of the reform initiatives currently being undertaken by our HR institutions. I trust that in the upcoming two days we would be able to identify additional ideas and thoughts that would assist with identifying gaps and the best solutions that would bring us on par with our regional and international peers.

In closing, please permit me to say that the increasing complexity of our Public Service requires that we continuously work together to find innovative ways in which we can ensure that our most valuable asset, our human resources, are able to deliver on Government's Strategic Vision 2030. I therefore wish you a successful two days of creativity and the enthusiasm to develop and give us new ideas for successful implementation, and the continuation of the work started by our pioneer leaders.

Thank You.

