



GREETINGS BY

THE HONOURABLE CAROLYN SEEPERSAD-BACHAN

MINISTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

MP FOR SAN FERNANDO WEST

RECEPTION FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JICA ALUMNI

ASSOCIATION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE

4 MAXWELL PHILLIP STREET, ST. CLAIR

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 9TH, 2013



Ministry of
Public Administration

Salutations:

His Excellency, Ambassador Yoshimasa Tezuka

The Hon. Winston Dookeran, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Stacy Harris, Representative of the JICA Alumni Association
Of Trinidad and Tobago

Minasama Konbanwa - Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Evening

Thank you for inviting me to tonight's function which I consider another step forward, and a significant development in our transition to a fully knowledge-based, techno-savvy society. I am always pleased to be involved in events that are linked to technical cooperation between Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean region as a whole, and the more developed countries which are ahead of us on the road to sustainable development. They can help us to avoid the many pitfalls that are possible along

that route and can provide us with useful insights into the adoption and adaptation of existing and emerging technologies. Japan is the best example of a country which, despite the scarcity of natural resources, was able to revolutionize information technology, apply it to a wide variety of uses, and is willing to share its experiences, expertise and lessons with the rest of the world.

Early last year I participated in the launch of the CARICOM Alumni Association Forum when it became a part of the Japan International Cooperation Agency or JICA Network. I understand that the forum is fully operational and is already providing support for information exchange and eventually project development. In this context, I see the formation of the JICA Alumni Association in Trinidad and Tobago as part of the widening and deepening of the JICA network and I am glad to be part of it. Whether it is the new technology now on display at the Consumer Electronics Show in

Miami, the driverless cars that are being demonstrated, or the new developments in business technology, Japan continues to be a world leader and we must capitalize on our connection with that country.

This is why I not only hope but I expect the network to be a catalyst for nationals from this country to explore opportunities that are rapidly becoming available. They must be able to help us evaluate all these new technologies, look at the pros and cons from the perspective of our national development, and then help with not just whether we use them or not, but how best to use them for our benefit. They are a vital link as we integrate technology with our public service transformation and develop the citizen-centric society that is our goal.

In this sense, the network is an important resource – a think tank for helping us solve some of the issues now facing us and those

that will inevitably arise as we move further along the information super-highway.

As we go forward as a nation, and as we try to cope with the challenges and simultaneously grasp the opportunities that the future holds for us, we have to depend even more on our allies. Our relationship with Japan and other countries, like India and Singapore, as well as the many international agencies that provide scholarships for advanced studies in areas that are vital to our future survival and sustainability, will become increasingly important to sustain and maintain. It is in this sense that we must thank the Japanese Government for its contribution, not just to the JICA but to our country's development. We are very grateful for the many opportunities for technical training and development that JICA and the Government of Japan offer. For the record, JICA administers one of the world's largest training programmes with

15 domestic offices in Japan alone and is responsible for training thousands of persons from developing countries annually.

As the Minister of Public Administration, I have a mandate and a dream. My mandate is to transform the public service so that citizens will be able to access government services of the highest quality in the shortest time and at the lowest cost. However, as the Prime Minister said at our Gala Event in December, transforming the public service means transforming the entire country. We will do our part. We will use the scholarship opportunities made available to us, provide a supportive environment for change, and ensure that the technology and the necessary facilities are in place. However, we cannot go it alone.

Public Service transformation is everybody's business and we need to involve all our stakeholders in the process, not just Governments but associations like yours which consist of

nationals with the training and the commitment to make our country the best possible place in which to live. We see you playing an important role in the process of Transformation and we urge you to become involved.'

In closing, I would like to thank the Japanese Ambassador, the members of staff of the Japanese Embassy and JICA for their ongoing efforts to help the development of our country and its people. You have all truly demonstrated the tenets of the mission statement of JICA, that is to be *"...a bridge between the people of Japan and developing countries"...who "...will advance international cooperation through the sharing of knowledge and experience and who "... will work to build a more peaceful and prosperous world"*.

You all are indeed true friends of Trinidad and Tobago.

Arigato Gozaimasu (do not pronounce the u) - Thank you very much (polite form)