



Joint Select Committee on Foreign Affairs

Summary of Proceedings
Public Hearing Summary
Virtual Public Hearing
Wednesday April 19, 2023 at 1:59p.m.

Topic:

Inquiry into “*Deepening Existing Ties*” with the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.

Objectives of the Inquiry:

1. To consider measures implemented to strengthen economic, trade and diplomatic relations between Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana;
2. To explore the potential for sustainable development partnerships between Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana both bilaterally and within the CARICOM context; and
3. To consider ways to leverage the social and cultural proximity between Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana.

Committee Members:

The following Committee Members were present:

- i. Dr. Dillon Remy – Vice Chairman
- ii. Ms. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP - Member
- iii. Mr. Terrence Deyalsingh, MP - Member
- iv. Mr. Brian Manning, MP – Member
- v. Mr. Anil Roberts – Member

WITNESSES WHO APPEARED:

Officials from the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs (MOFCA)

- Ms. Reita Toussaint, Permanent Secretary
- Ms. Ayesha Wharton, Director, CARICOM and Caribbean Affairs
- Ms. Sunita Harrikissoon, Director, Legal Services
- Mrs. Saschele Griffith, Foreign Service Officer

Officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF)

- Mr. Ric Javed Ali, Deputy Permanent Secretary
- Mr. Kishore Ragbir, Technical Officer Ag. Research – (Crops)

- Mr. Nigel Grimes, Project Coordinator/Technical Advisor

Key Issues Discussed with the Ministries of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs and Agriculture, Land and Fisheries

Bilateral Relations

1. The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Cooperative Republic of Guyana have intensified their relationship through bilateral cooperation and regional collaboration via CARICOM. Over the years, there have been several agreements between the two countries in areas such as food security, energy, and culture, including:
 - i. MOU concerning cooperation in the area of Food Security;
 - ii. Framework Agreement for the Deepening of Bilateral Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana;
 - iii. MOU on Energy Sector Cooperation;
 - iv. MOU between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Cooperative Republic of Guyana on Renewed and Enhanced Cooperation; and
 - v. MOU on the Establishment of Friendly Cooperative Relations between the City of Port of Spain, in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the City of Georgetown, in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.
2. Staffing at the Trinidad and Tobago High Commission in Guyana is currently being addressed. A Commercial Attaché for the High Commission has been appointed but is yet to assume duty. The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs (MOFCA) is in the process of hiring locally recruited staff to provide support to the High Commission.
3. The MOFCA records reveal that nationals from both countries have been applying for Certificates of Recognition of Skills Qualification (CSME Skills Certificates) and are being granted same.

Engagement in Regional and Multilateral Fora

4. Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, as members of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), have worked together with other member states in relation to the broad areas for cooperation which are Transportation, Tourism, Trade and External relations, and Disaster Risk Reduction.
5. Under the ACS, training has been provided for technical officers of member states in the field of disaster risk management.

Food Security

6. Food security remains a significant challenge in the Caribbean region, exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19 and its associated socio-economic fallout. There is a rising food import bill coupled with declining investment in agriculture and food production. The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries (MALF) has sought to collaborate with the Cooperative Republic of Guyana to address the challenges in improving the competitiveness and sustainability of the agricultural sector.
7. The developments in area of food security are outlined below.
 - i. The Guyana/Trinidad and Tobago Food Development Plan
The Guyana/Trinidad and Tobago Food Development Plan comprises 8 priority areas which are:
 - (a) Aquaculture,
 - (b) Rice,
 - (c) Human Resources,
 - (d) Agro-processing and food distribution network,
 - (e) Livestock Production,
 - (f) Shade-House and Coconut Project,
 - (g) Technical Taskforce, and
 - (h) Corn and Soya.

In February 2003, Trinidad and Tobago received 5,000 coconut seeds from the Government of Guyana to revitalise and modernise the local coconut industry. Further, Trinidad and Tobago is in the process of acquiring approximately 91 tonnes of rice seed for this rice season commencing in June 2023.

- ii. The Joint Trinidad and Tobago/Guyana Technical Taskforce
The Joint Trinidad and Tobago/Guyana Technical Taskforce on the promotion of bilateral agricultural trade and development was established to facilitate the exchange of technical support and cross-border investment as well as to review and revise the Trinidad and Tobago/Guyana fresh agricultural trade produce and forest products trade protocol signed in 2009. The Taskforce has met on 2 occasions in January and February 2023, and is supported by a technical subcommittee comprising a Chief Technical Officer and other key technical officers from the Ministries with responsibility for Agriculture of both countries.

Other Initiatives

8. Trinidad and Tobago is actively pursuing engagement with respect to tourism and cultural cooperation. With respect to tourism, possible areas of collaboration include planning and development for the tourism sector; research and exchange of data and information on

tourism planning and development; and transfer of knowledge and information on product development as it pertains to tourism sites and attractions.

View the Hearing:

The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube page via the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eatWxNaVBxw>

Contact Information:

You may contact the Committee's Secretary at jscfa@tpparliament.org or 624-7275 Ext. 2287.

Committees Unit

May 11, 2023