



Feature Address by:

THE HON. CAROLYN SEEPERSAD-BACHAN
Minister of Public Administration

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SALUTATIONS [ALL PROTOCOLS OBSERVED]

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen...

It is my pleasure today to warmly welcome participants of the **CARICAD-CLAD MINISTERIAL SYMPOSIUM** on the **PUBLIC SERVICE AS A MECHANISM FOR STRENGTHENING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: BUILDING BRIDGES OF SOLIDARITY AND COOPERATION**. **I think this is the first event ever as I heard from some of my colleagues here today, and to those who organized this event for this First Ministerial Symposium, I think you deserve a round of applause.**

To CARICAD, the CARICOM Secretariat and CARICAD member states who are all members of CARICOM and are in home territory I welcome you. I also wish to extend a special welcome to CLAD, CLAD member countries, the Government of Spain and special guests from the Organisation of American States.

We gather here today a diverse group of participants from countries in Latin America and the Caribbean Region

We are united by history, by our common experiences of colonialism and independence, by our aspirations and plans for sustainability, by our efforts to modernize our economies and our public administrations, and by Information and Communication Technologies which bring not just our countries but the entire world, closer together.

Over the next two days, we will explore the experiences of our Latin American colleagues as the member countries of CLAD developed and implemented the Ibero-American Public Service Charter. And this morning, I am pleased to hear of the many other charters that you have also

instituted. These experiences will significantly enrich the deliberations of our Caribbean colleagues as the member states of CARICAD begin the process of formulating a Caribbean Public Service Charter.

In my opinion, this process convincingly demonstrates the power of collaboration, since it provides us the opportunity to apply the lessons learned from the Ibero-American Public Service Charter in a way that will enable the Caribbean Public Service Charter to leapfrog CARICAD Public Administrations firmly into the twenty first century.

In addition to the sharing of lessons learnt, it is hoped that we will identify partnerships for progress and explore synergies. It is hoped that our work together at this Symposium will have the added benefit of bringing us closer together.

And therefore, I endorse all those previous speakers here this morning who have expressed good wishes and good intentions to achieve these objectives. It is time now that we make it a reality. It is incumbent on us to accomplish significant gains in public administration in our countries that will redound to the benefit of our citizens. In this respect CLAD and CARICAD will be continuing the important work already undertaken by the Organization of American States, the CARICOM Secretariat, and the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), among others, to bring our region closer together, as we have heard from some of our previous speakers.

But important in all of this is the South-South cooperation context of our Symposium here today. It is also of great importance to our countries to start the South-South cooperation.

As CARICOM, as the Deputy Secretary General said this morning on all that we are doing to bring CARICOM countries together, we have been making steady progress on the integration of its member countries for some time, although we still have a long way to go. CARICAD and its parent organization CARICOM are trying to get us together on the important issues, one of which is public service leadership, but we need to be able to help ourselves and one another and narrow the divide that is no longer the Caribbean Sea but our own attitudes to one another, our self-imposed isolation and sometimes our reluctance to accept ideas which do not come from us.

Most of the members of CARICOM are members of the 53 Member Commonwealth Association of mostly former British colonies that encompasses Developed as well as Developing Countries and comprises one sixth of the world's population.

In practice, this means that the alliances that we are forging here in Port of Spain between CLAD and CARICAD can be further strengthened and enriched by the strong traditions of collaboration in the area of Public Administration by the countries of the Commonwealth, so we can bring that Commonwealth perspective. Imagine the range and diversity of perspectives that would be brought into this approach. Diversity as we know is one of the enablers for innovation and the world is moving toward Inter-Regional cooperation and not just Intra-Regional cooperation.

In this regard, I am happy to announce that Trinidad and Tobago will be hosting the 2016 Biennial Conference of the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM), in Port of Spain next year. This major event will provide an excellent opportunity the collaboration between our own organizations to a higher, global, level.

The interesting question is how then do we create the enabling environment, the supportive environment, which will sustain our Charters, both the Caribbean and Iberian-American

Charters? What do we need to do to ensure that these ideas, these practices, these methodologies, measures and mechanisms do not pass into nothingness, do not gather dust on shelves or remain in a box of discarded USB flash-drives waiting to be recycled?

First, any Charter must make sense to us and to others. They must all be founded on the solid rock of principles which will make them permanent. The examples might change. The applications might change. But the core will remain.

Secondly, all agreements, all Charters, must be bound to activities. I have found that Technical Cooperation is more than a bunch of words with many signatures and stamps. It is a set of activities guided by basic principles shared by partners in an agreement. Technical cooperation must always be action-based. In this sense it is a verb and not a noun. It is the fuel that keeps the flames burning. It must be oxygen. It cannot be an inert gas.

Thirdly, all Charters must be constantly reviewed, revised and even rewritten if necessary. They are alive and must change to suit the changing times, priorities and issues.

Our Charters will work if there is enough commonality to keep them alive. We talk too much about modalities and not enough about meaning and benefits, opportunities and hope for the ordinary people of our broader region. Any document, whether a Charter or a Catechism, must mean something to us. Purpose is more than process.

Although all of these enablers are critical, it is the human factor that is by far the most important. This is why today, as we start a historic meeting of minds of our wider region, to look at the public service and find common ground in our history, our experiences and our visions for the future, I am glad that our focus is on the public service and public functionaries. They are the

glue which not just holds countries together but can together unite nations, hemispheres and the world itself.

From my perspective, I see this Charter as a vehicle for shaping a common future for Public Administration on the Region. But it raises an interesting question; do we know what is that future? Do we know what that Public Service will look like in the future? Ten years - twenty years from now? Would it look anything like what it looks like today? Ministries in tall buildings and Ministers? Probably the Minister would not exist anymore twenty years from now. What if it is just branded services visible to citizens and invisible Ministries?

The future is so uncertain; so unpredictable. And yet we always talk about what that future is. Do we have an idea what that twenty-first century citizen is looking for? We know that he or she is very demanding. We know that they are very technology savvy. They want social media, they want to be part of the process – they do not just want to tell you how to improve the public service – they want to be part of the process of improving the public service, and therefore, are we preparing for that future? Where citizens will be part of a governance process? Are we preparing for the use of technology, that we will be able to activate the service from our mobile devices? And citizens demand to be fully informed in all aspects of Government.

And who is this new Public Officer that we are shaping for the future? Is this public officer, I don't know how many of you would remember a show called '*Yes Minister*'. I don't know if that public officer is going to be the one saying '*Yes Minister*, '*Yes Minister*' or is it that this public officer is an independent and critical thinker; empowered; technology savvy; innovative; creative; wants to take decisions. Interestingly, is it that this particular Public Officer may be working in teams, with other Public Officers, but in Cyberspace?

One interesting thing that IBM has said in the past is that, the future is built today. So whatever we do today, we will build that future. So just imagine, that by sitting here in this room, that you

are shaping that future of tomorrow. This is why I thought it was important to raise this particular issue as we move forward

Here at home, our own Public Service in Trinidad and Tobago emerged from Colonialism as the “Civil Service”. Speaking as a politician, permit me to put on the record that our public service has been the backbone of stability in our country. In times of crises it has been the group that held the country together. They are the people who ensure the smooth and peaceful transition of power from one administration to another and have responsibility for the management of the public coffers.

The most recent phase in the evolution of the Public Service of Trinidad and Tobago started in 2012 when we celebrated the Golden Anniversary of nationhood and set our Diamond Jubilee, 2022, as the date by which Excellence in Service Delivery will be institutionalized and more, internalized, within all our public service institutions.

This commitment to service excellence will become a way of life in a citizen-centric public service where quality is king, queen and noble. We call this period 2012 to 2022 the Journey from Gold to Diamond or G2D and the end of it will see a new beginning where all public goods and services will be more easily accessible, of much higher quality, cheaper, better and widely available to everyone. My dream is that any process can be initiated from a mobile phone or computer, and that every Ministry, Department or public service entity will be a centre for all government products, and that all public officers will be customer focused, accountable and adaptable.

Inevitably, our journey to service excellence has stimulated a lively debate on the evolving nature of the Public Service. For example:

- Is the Public Service a source of stability and national security, or is it a major contributor to our lack of competitiveness?
- Similarly, we have a Public Service Commission which alone has the power to hire or discipline public officers – no Minister or Prime Minister, no Permanent Secretary or Manager has that power. Is this a bastion for freedom or a barrier to productivity? Is it one of those institutions that protects the rights of citizens but also prohibits some important aspects of national development?

I know some of our CARICOM neighbours are having these debates. This is something we share with many of you here today and the countries of CLAD and CARICOM. In fact, it is part of a bigger issue. None of us, whether Caribbean or Latin American, can transform the public service without transforming the entire nation. Public officers are an integral part of the national population and in countries like ours constitute about 14% - 20% of the working population.

They are producers, managers and consumers of all public goods and services. Indeed, for the Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean, the Public Service is typically the single largest market for the Private Sector.

In this sense, the whole country must be transformed if the public service is to evolve into what all of us want it to be – committed, capable, communicative, consistent, creative and credible. There are six C-words or Cs in this evolution and each of them is deeper and harder to navigate than the Caribbean Sea which simultaneously separates and joins us together.

I believe that as we wrestle with all the issues some local and some universal, the sharing of our experiences in Trinidad and Tobago might be helpful. We have all inherited problems and we all have some kind of modernization or transformation process in mind.

What we found is that all our nation's previous attempts at public service transformation or modernization did not achieve the results that were hoped for. It is on this basis that many people ask us why we think this present effort, our G2D, will succeed when the others all failed.

What we built on is the convergence taking place among several critical factors that are individually important to the transformation process and together can create considerable synergy for success. These complementary forces include the use of ICTs as enablers for Public Service Transformation, the increasing demand by citizens, organizations and interest groups for value for money and the political will for transformation. But the fourth critical force is the will of the Public Officers themselves who are beginning to welcome, embrace and lead the transformation process. This is why our ten year Gold to Diamond Journey was designed to involve, yes, an array of cutting edge initiatives, but that these initiatives are all engineered and executed by these empowered Public Officers.

And this is why I was so heartened when I looked at the Ibero-American Charter as it speaks to so many issues that we are grappling with in our Gold to Diamond. Issues such as the guiding principles of equality, meritocracy, transparency, objectivity and impartiality. This particular Charter spoke to the continuous learning Public Service, an integrated Public Service by the way that is results-based and encourages that right values and right behaviours of our Public Officers.

Importantly, I noted the leadership aspect of this Charter and the shift in that Paradigm, and I was very much impressed with this Charter. It speaks therefore to who that new Public Officer is and these are really all the foundational blocks that we must have if we are to be able to set a Public Service framework for the future.

One that although there may be an unpredictable future, would allow us to catch that wave for the future regardless of how many times that wave may change course through uncharted waters.

CLAD has provided an excellent starting point for CARICOM for the development of a framework that will allow us to lay this foundation very quickly without reinventing the wheel. But the work does not stop there. It is about taking it further, and we have to understand here in the regions, both Latin America and the CARICOM the importance of having this Charter. And this Charter, in my view, allows us to exploit economies of scale, it allows us to harmonize legal and regulatory frameworks for Public Service; it allows us to introduce new standards, best practices, and to continuously improve on those best practices.

Therefore, I think it is important that we pay tribute to CLAD for introducing this Charter here today as our starting point, and I want to give CLAD a round of applause for participating.

A key factor in the renewal and modernization of the Public Service is the increased engagement of Citizens. In this regard, I would like to congratulate CLAD and CARICAD for your foresight in inviting the Organization of American States to facilitate a discussion on Open Government during our Symposium.

As we know Open Government is one of the major emerging movements in contemporary Public Administration Practice. By making information on the business of Government freely available to all citizens, we are able to improve Openness and Transparency, thereby building trust and public confidence in Government; create opportunities for business and synergies between Government and Private Sector through the availability of Government Data; and to strengthen Governance and Democracy through the engagement of citizens in the business of the Public Sector. Therefore this is why I found this topic so important in shaping any Charter going forward as it speaks to transparency, objectivity and engagement with citizens.

Based on my observations over the past few years, I firmly believe that Latin America has much to offer the Caribbean in the area of Open Government, through the sharing of experiences, learnings and best practices, as well as technical assistance under the framework of South-South Cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to pay tribute to all the countries, institutions and organisations which have brought us together here today and which are represented among the professionals participation and facilitating.

I am an optimist about the Caribbean and Latin America. I believe we will cross the barriers of the past and easily jump the hurdles of the present. I believe we will use ICTs as the time machines that will take public service transformation into the future. But, at the base of it all, is the unique Caribbean and Latin American psyche that we all share, the feeling of adventure and optimism with which we greet each other, each day.

There is therefore no doubt in my mind that our deliberations in Port of Spain over the next two days will establish a mutually beneficial and long-lasting relationship between CLAD and CARICAD. I look forward with great anticipation to a fruitful and stimulating Symposium.

As we try to reinvent ourselves and our institutions, I want to quote from a Caribbean Poet, Derek Walcott who says in his poem “Love After Love”:

The time will come
when, with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome
and say sit here.

I do not doubt that the time will come when this happens.

I also want to quote Pablo Neruda of Chile, one of the member-states of CLAD. He wrote:

“And one by one the nights between our separated cities are joined to the night that unites us.”
Tonight at our function you will see for yourselves that it is one night of unity and togetherness.



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Pablo Neruda was also known for writing in green ink – his personal symbol for desire and hope. Perhaps we should also write our two Charters, the Caribbean and the Ibero-American, in green ink.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you.

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