

Closing Remarks and Thanks Lecture
on the Oversight Committee System in
the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Hon. Bridgid Mary Annisette-George,
MP - Speaker of the House

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Salutation

- Sen. the Hon. Christine Kangaloo, President of the Senate
- Cabinet Ministers and Ministers of State
- Members of the Senate
- Members of the House of Representatives
- Specially Invited
- Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Government Agencies
- Members of the Media
- Members of Staff at the Office of the Parliament
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good Afternoon!

We have come to the end of a very interesting evening and I enthusiastically embrace the opportunity to thank Professor Rick Stapenhurst for his erudite lecture on *the Oversight Committee System in Trinidad and Tobago*. Professor Stapenhurst has presented us with scientific data and his professional evaluation and assessment of our current oversight structures.

Professor Stapenhurst has underscored the inverse relationship which exists between corruption and economic growth and development and has reminded us that our country's ranking on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index has slipped over the past decade.

However, the Professor's presentation should have given to us hope as he has demonstrated that with effective parliamentary oversight levels of corruption have decreased and relating that

solution to Trinidad and Tobago, we have been heartened to learn from the comparison of our committee oversight system with other larger democracies we have all the requisite structures and most of the tools.

Indeed we have our unique characteristics, as shall exist in any other society. Those unique characteristics such as low public trust, part-time parliamentarians affect the optimization of the functionality, and effectiveness of our oversight committees.

This Parliament wishes to assure its largest stakeholders, that is the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago that it is committed to the improvement of our oversight function in spite of our unique characteristics and this week of activities which comprised not only of this Public Lecture is aimed at educating you and engaging you in our attempts to get it right.

May I be permitted the liberty to advise that our week of activities also caters for workshops with Parliamentarians and the Parliamentary Staff aimed at strengthening our capabilities and efficiency and a panel of reputable and experienced citizens in a discussion on crafting our own unique improved and effective model.

Your presence at this Public Lecture is comforting and your keen participation in The Question and Answer segment manifests that there is public interest in what our Parliament is doing but that the relationship between Parliament and the public needs to be fostered. The Parliament's strategic plan 2013-2018 has *identified among our objectives building Parliaments's outreach*. Indeed, Parliament must actively seek to encourage and strengthen its relationship with civil society.

Professor, your assessment was timely; it closely followed the period when the Parliament declared its desire for improved scrutiny of the government by the expansion of the oversight committees to 16. We are indeed grateful.

As we work further with Professor Stapenhurst, we will continue to share our findings with you the public (direct comment to the audience).

Before I close it will be remiss of me if I fail to recognize that many persons would have contributed to making the week of activities and this event a reality.

I wish to thank Madam President Senator Christine Kangaloo for her support and participation in the undertaking of this very important initiative.

In 2014, Parliamentarians amended the Standing Orders to enhance parliamentary oversight and to provide the necessary support to enable our stakeholders and citizens at large to have enhanced role in supporting the committee process. I see some of those Members present this evening and take this opportunity to thank all the Members of the last parliament for their determined action in this regard.

I thank those Members of the current Parliament who are here with us this evening. I trust that you would embrace the opportunities that will be made available for you to participate even further in the strengthening initiatives.

**CLOSING REMARKS AND THANKS LECTURE ON THE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN
THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO HON. BRIGID MARY ANNISSETTE-GEORGE,
MP - SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE**

To the various stakeholders present here this evening, thank you for your attendance. You all are an integral part of the oversight process and we hope that this lecture has provided you with a deeper understanding of your role in the process.

I will also like to thank members of the media in attendance for your continued support of the work we do here at the Parliament.

All events take considerable planning well in advance before their launch and the hosting of this week of activities is no exception. I acknowledge the efforts and work of the Staff of the Parliament and therefore I express gratitude to all those who have supported us in practical ways from behind the scenes: the administration staff, the tireless procedural Clerks; the Parliament Police and the other support staff. Please be assured that we are deeply appreciative of your assistance.

As indicated before there, we have other activities this week which involve other persons who have possibly cut short their Christmas

vacation time to share their experiences with us. We have with us - Mr. Geoff Dubrow (Governance Consultant who has worked with us in this region through ParlAmericas and the World Bank); Mr. Audley Shaw (Chair and long serving Member of the Jamaica PAC and Member of the PAAC); Dr. Jeannine Comma (CEO/Director, Cave Hill School of Business, University of the West Indies) and Dr. Justin Robinson (Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Campus). Sincere appreciation is extended to you all.

So against the background of this evening's lecture and discussions we embark on the week's activities under the theme '*Parliamentary Oversight: A Model for Small States*'. We leave here with one unchallengeable conclusion: parliamentary oversight matters and with the will determination and support we shall GET IT RIGHT!

I thank you!