



**Welcome Address
by**

**The Honourable Bridgid Mary Annisette-George, MP
Speaker of the House of Representatives**

at the

**ParlAmericas Workshop
on
Strengthening Accountability through Fiscal Transparency
Practices**

**Port-of- Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
September 6, 2017**

Hyatt Regency, Trinidad

Salutations

- **The Honourable Christine Kangaloo, President of the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**
- **The President of the Executive Board of ParlAmericas
Senator Marcela Guerra**
- **The Vice President for the Caribbean Region of the Open Parliament Network of ParlAmericas, Senator Dr. Sapphire Longmore of Jamaica**
- **The Honourable Leonne Theodore-John, Speaker of the House of the St. Lucian House of Assembly**
- **Members of Parliament and Clerks of the member Parliaments of ParlAmericas**
- **Our facilitators,**

Mr Kevin Page, President and CEO, Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy;

Mr. Juan Pablo Guerrero, the Network Director, global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency

Ms. Cheryl Gibson, Assistant Clerk, Parliament of Jamaica

Mr. Jason Jacques, Director of Fiscal Analysis, Parliamentary Budget Office of Canada

Our own Ms. Keiba Jacob, Procedural Clerk of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago

Dr. Maurice McNaughton, Director of the Centre of Excellence for IT-enabled Innovation, Mona School of Business of the University of West Indies

Ms Manuela Garza, Founding Partner, Colectivo Cometa

- **The Director General Alisha Todd and Staff of ParlAmericas**
- **The Clerk of the Parliament Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and the Staff of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago**

- **Specially invited guests**
- **The Media**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good morning.

Welcome to Trinidad and Tobago and to the inauguration of this progressive two- day workshop designed and hosted by ParlAmericas.

The Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago was extremely enthused when it learnt of the announcement of the Director General of ParlAmericas of the plan to host this workshop entitled *Strengthening Accountability through Fiscal Transparency Practices* in our country. Our enthusiasm was not simply fuelled by the fact that as a serving member of the Board our country was selected to be the venue host, but primarily because our Parliament is deeply committed to the principles of accountability and to fiscal transparency practices.

Additionally, a workshop of this nature could not be more suitably timed for our Parliament, as we near the end of our fiscal year and shall shortly begin our budgetary process for the fiscal year 2017-2018.

The genesis of ParlAmericas, was the creation of an Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA), following resolution 1673/99, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) and which has developed into a hemispheric organisation of Parliaments.

All of us gathered here are acutely aware that in our Democracies, the Parliament- the Legislature-, as an institution, serves both as the bedrock upon which our democracies stand and as the vanguard which secures and protects it.

ParlAmericas, as a convenor of some thirty-five (35) national legislatures of the member states of the OAS, provides a platform for the widening of the

duties of bedrock and vanguard of our Parliaments beyond our respective national geographic boundaries to encompass this Hemisphere.

Through its five key objectives of:

- 1. contributing to the development of inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation in dealing with issues of hemispheric concern;**
- 2. increasing the sharing of experiences, dialogue, and inter-parliamentary collaboration on issues of common interest to the member states;**
- 3. helping in the strengthening of the role of the legislative branch in democracy, and in the promotion and defence of democracy and human rights;**
- 4. promoting the harmonization of legislation and development of legislation among member states; and**
- 5. contributing to the process of integration as one of the most appropriate instruments for sustainable and harmonious development in the hemisphere,**

ParlAmericas promotes parliamentary diplomacy in the inter-American system, facilitates technical groups on parliamentary best practices and promotes cooperative political dialogue on issues affecting North, Central and

South America and the Caribbean. Its work is effected through it is 3 pillars of:

- Gender Equality provided by The Network for Gender Equality
- Climate Change provided by The Network on Climate Change ; and
- Legislative openness and transparency provided the Open Parliament Network.

It is well settled that the role of modern Parliaments is continuously evolving. In addition to fulfilling its traditional functions that is to say-legislative budgetary and representative- Parliaments are now duty bound to hold the Executive accountable for its policies activities and expenditure. This latter duty is an amorphous one. As recently as December 2015 the United Nations identified a more amplified and specific role of holding the Executive accountable- Parliament, the Legislature has been entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring and overseeing the Executive in the attainment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals identified by Agenda 2030, by which **no one shall be left behind.**

Today and tomorrow, the activities, in which we shall be engaged, will focus our attention on our roles as Parliamentarians and members of civil society respectively, in the identification of mechanisms and tools which can improve accountability and transparency in the budgetary cycle. The impact of this event cannot be sufficiently underscored as its ripple effect is not confined to the enhancement of our individual capacities to identify and eliminate waste mismanagement and corruption in our individual democracies but is applicable to our role of holding our Executives to its international obligation to achieve sustainable development.

Sustainable Development **GOAL 16** speaks specifically to (i) the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development (ii) the provision of justice for all and (iii) the building of effective accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Of equal importance, the collaboration and dialogue amongst us is consistent with the mandate of **SDG GOAL 17** of *Revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development* as it is stated under the rubric of that goal:

A successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships at the global regional national and local level ...and strengthening of the oversight functions of legislatures.

So while our assembly as defined by numbers may be less impressive than other august Assemblies such as the United Nations, our work is no less impressive in stature. We must be ever mindful that it is in intimate setting such as these that the real work gets done. I therefore look forward with

Before I close and in the spirit of the objectives of ParlAmericas may I urge us all during our deliberations to keep in our minds hearts and prayers the fate of the citizens of some of our member Parliaments who stand in the path of Tropical Storm Irma. We are mindful that some of the representatives of Member Parliaments of affected countries had have to cancelled their attendance and arguable our dialogue may be not be as rich as it could be due to their absence. I do hope that they all fear well.

I now invite Senator Dr. Sapphire Longmore of the Parliament of Jamaica who is the Vice President for the Caribbean Region of the Open Parliament Network to address you.

I thank you!