

Transcript – Prime Minister Rowley hosts Media Conference (Thursday 21st July 2016)

Venue: VIP Lounge, Piarco International Airport

Notes: The Prime Minister, Dr the Honorable Keith Rowley, hosted a media conference yesterday, Thursday 21st July 2016, at 5:30 pm in the VIP Lounge, Piarco International Airport, following his return from a four-day official visit to Jamaica.

---BEGINNING---

Thank you very much. Good afternoon to you members of the media. Well we just return, our full delegation is back. As you know the delegation representing the interest of Trinidad and Tobago, which included Foreign Minister, Senator Dennis Moses, Minister of Caricom Affairs, Minister Stuart Young, Minister in The Office of the Prime Minister, and Minister in the Office of The Attorney General, Chief Secretary Orville London, and MP Prakash Ramadhar, from the basic unit supported by our technical team.

We had a very hectic and successful visit to Jamaica. Initiated largely in response, to an invitation, initiated to an invitation by the Prime Minister of Jamaica, who had raised with me, when we first meet in La Belize, and indicated to me that the situation in Jamaica with respect to the relationship between Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica was deteriorating and if it was left unattended, am, could result in some very undesirable consequences for Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, and I accepted an invitation to visit Jamaica so as to be able to better, put Trinidad and Tobago's position to Jamaicans to whom certain misunderstanding and misrepresentations were advance from certain quarters.

It's important to note, that if this kind of development had been allowed to remain unattended it could have fed right back to Trinidad and Tobago, where our productive capacity could have been finding challenges with respect to our outlets and factories and that would have certainly affect he jobs of persons who are employed in these factories. Not to mention the losses that would occur and it's the kind of thing where once begin to fester, becomes more and more difficult to cauterize later on. So our visit to Jamaica was one where we were able to prepare and present to Jamaicans, Trinidad and Tobago's position in the matter of free movement in the Caricom and at the level of the heads of Government in Georgetown, this matter came up and we discuss at length, the requirement for citizens of our region governed under the Chaguaramas Treaty to be properly informed as to the conditions under which the so called free movement of citizens exist.

Yes we have substantial free movement in the region but there are some conditions where that movement could be restricted and in so far as Trinidad and Tobago has had to restrict the movement of some persons in Trinidad and Tobago, we and to defend our actions and stand by our laws and our officers, but at the same time, we have taken steps to ensure that we are not in the wrong with respect as to how we treat people arriving in Trinidad and Tobago.

So, this was the main matter which initiated my visit to Jamaica and I am pleased to say when I got there, the people who were particularly aggrieved and who were the mouth pieces for this matter and who were the influence makers, am, we were able to speak face to face to them and very clearly outlined the position in the context of our commitments under the Chagaramas Treaty and they understood very clearly and we left Jamaica with the understanding that this matter is now behind us. We also understand that there are great opportunities that can replace these threats and we took the opportunity for the days that we were there, to engage in high level discussions on a number of other matters which would put Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica in the position that we really want them to be in Caricom, leaders of Caricom setting an example for the rest of the Union and also to carry out the commitments that we made at the Heads of Government level and the many commitments which are lying in Caricom Secretariat unattended and many of these came up as issues of interests today and the condition of having two new Prime Ministers in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica allowed us to discuss

these matters from a reset stand point, where we are able to look at them a little more dispassionately, and at the level of Heads of Government from for example, the Single Market and Economy (CSME) we have already taken the steps to have a review done as to where we are at with the matters of work that has already been done and work to be done and on what matters .

We also had the opportunity to interface with another I don't want to say troubling but another eye brow raising development, when we were informed that Jamaica had put in place a committee to review Jamaica's relationship with Caricom. Immediately I presume, giving our historical antecedence, that development was the subject of extensive discussion in some quarters not just in Trinidad and Tobago but in Jamaica itself and outside of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica where it was being seen as though something is developing where it can have far reaching consequences. So we took the opportunity to meet with this committee which is headed by former Prime Minister Bruce Golding one of the more experience Caribbean parliamentarians and a Prime minister of not to distance past and those discussions were extremely valuable to us the Trinidad and Tobago delegation because we were able to get a clear understanding as to exactly what the terms of reference were for this committee and we had some very valuable discussions with former Prime Minister Golding and his team and we discussed at length Caribbean Airlines and their context of air transport and the role of Air Jamaica with Caribbean Airlines and the expectations of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago as shareholders in this airline.

We discussed the possibility of developing proper understanding of reintroducing proper inter island sea transport into the region and also some pathways by which we can pursue these two areas of air transport and sea transport and to improve the whole question of inter-regional travel, the very thing initiated the discussion we know talking to see how we can improve the ability of our citizens to do business by island to island more easily and also we discussed the issues of our security services cooperating more closely and we met with the Heads of the Jamaican Security services there and certain things have been put in place for further contact.

In short out of this meeting has come, a face to face interaction of Jamaica's leaders and Trinidad and Tobago's leaders. We met with their leaders in the business community their Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturing Association, the Defence Services, Foreign Affairs and I can tell that our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Trinidad and Tobago and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Jamaica, they have a clear pathway and a work program to follow along the lines of what I discussed. Also, the whole question of the Attorney General's office in Jamaica and the Attorney General's office in Trinidad and Tobago, where a number of things have to be done to advance what we have been discussing in terms of carrying out our Caricom commitments as well as making adjustments in our local laws to regionalise some actions which have to take place.

We also had the opportunity to spend the day with the Management and the top Administration at the University of the West Indies at Mona and that has been particularly useful because we were able to get an insight as to what was happening in respect to at the University of the West Indies, what is current, what is forward looking and also what it holds for our students who are now there and who might go there in greater numbers in the future and also we were able get a first-hand of a presentation from all the campus heads by Skype technology.

We had a conference where I was able to address, The Head of the Cave Hill Campus, Mona Campus and the St. Augustine Open Campus all at once and to take questions from them and to be enlightened as to what is happening. We also meet the students many of whom had some concerns about our review of Gate which, seem to be getting ahead of itself in terms of the report being before the Cabinet and until that report has been digested by the Cabinet, Cabinet considers the recommendations and while that is going on there is some anxiety which we had to respond to and we also had the opportunity to tour the facilities at Mona and to make some comparisons with what exists in Trinidad and Tobago. Not just servicing the students on the campus but in servicing the nation of Jamaica and we would have to look and see to what extent how we are serviced in Trinidad and Tobago.

So that day out in Jamaica at Mona was extremely valuable and of course today I started off... I had the opportunity of addressing the 22nd day of the Law of the Sea Conference in Jamaica and as you know Jamaica is the home of the Law of the Sea authority which is the only major intentional body hosting a developing country and Trinidad and Tobago has been there at its birth. Those of you who know the name Lennox Ballock, know that he was former Permanent Secretary who became an expert of the Law of the Sea and together with some other developing countries experts we did bring about this institutions on which is housed in Jamaica and today was their conference where the Secretary General was being elected and I did address that conference outlining and confirming Trinidad and Tobago's position commitment and involvement in it and there is a communiqué which the Minister of Foreign Affairs, would make available because at the end of all of this in Jamaica, there is a joint communiqué signed by the Prime Minister of Jamaica and myself outlining what we have address and committed to and that would give you further insight on what is it going on and what is in front of us going forward.

Basically that was a summary of what our twenty five (25) hour days four (4) days and we were all pretty exhausted at the end. It was not helped by us the losing the match to Jamaica but we would have preferred if we had won but the team did not win them but we are looking forward to the finals. But it was a very useful trip and I think by a large general sentiment in Jamaica and hopefully in Trinidad and Tobago is that the intervention was necessary and timely and it was successful.

---END---