



PRESS RELEASE – THE CONCEPT OF ‘SERVICES’ AND THE PRESIDENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

On behalf of all the the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Service Industries, we would like to extend cordial congratulations to her Excellency, Paula Mae Weekes, President of Trinidad and Tobago on her ascension to the position of the first female president of Trinidad and Tobago.

President Weekes has created history, becoming the first female Head of State of Trinidad and Tobago. Today we at the TTCSI are very proud as a coalition body based in Trinidad and Tobago of this achievement. The TTCSI is committed to our service of lobbying, advocating and supporting the service sector in Trinidad and our members; a diverse group that includes bodies representing artists and animators, bankers and contractors. As the voice of the service sector, we have historically had female leadership among our members. At the TTCSI there are ten (10) members with female presidents; these members span sectors such as the Trinidad and Tobago Association of Midwives (TTAM), the Association of Real Estate Agents (AREA) to the Trinidad and Tobago Planners Society.

But even as we celebrate this event; the economic and social environment presents unique challenges that require all nationals to recommit to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. Ms. Mae Weekes, as President, is also charged to provide strong service to Trinidad and Tobago. As our first female President, what does ‘service’ to Trinidad and Tobago mean in that role?

Though the President is the repository of all Executive Authority; her powers are exercisable within certain constitutional limits and most of the constitutional acts must be performed in accordance with the advice of or after consultation with another authority, usually the Cabinet, the Prime Minister or the Leader of the Opposition. Simply put, under the 1976 constitution, like the British Sovereign, whom the President replaced as head of state, the role is quasi-ceremonial in nature he or she **"reigns but does not rule"**. In practice, executive authority is exercised by the Prime Minister and his or her cabinet, on behalf of the President.

Discussions over the strengthening ‘the role of the President’ have arisen due to issues of national importance in recent times. Similarly concerns over legislative reform and amendments to the Constitution have also arisen – the country is yet to define the Way Forward. We at the TTCSI are working with several member organisations to support the finalization of position and policy papers targeted at setting standards for their membership through strengthening the powers of self regulation – especially enforcement powers related to recognition, licensing and registration of members.

We congratulate Ms. Weekes and we share her call to ensure that ‘she will not walk alone.’ We will continue to support our membership and by so doing seek the national interest of Trinidad and Tobago.

Citation: According to the Parliament website, www.ttparliament.org, the President of Trinidad and Tobago “is the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces (TT Defense Force: TT Regiment, TT Coast Guard, TT Air Guard, TT Defence Force Reserves