



The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Local Government

**A Statement by Senator the Honourable Hazel Manning
Minister of Local Government**

**Local Government Reform
Thursday May 1, 2008**

Cabinet has approved the Green Paper on *Local Government Reform: Roles and Responsibilities of Local Government Bodies*.

The current Local Government reform initiative has been on the national agenda since 2004 and I wish to trace the events briefly for you. In 2004 a decentralization unit was established in the Ministry of Local Government. A Green Paper was then published for public comment. The issues arising from numerous consultations, together with the recommendations of the Local Government Inter-Ministerial Transitional Task Force on functions and responsibilities to be decentralized, were included in a Draft White Paper. The final document was approved by Cabinet and laid in Parliament in May 2006.

In 2006, the Ministry of Local Government engaged the services of a consultancy firm through the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The consultants were mandated to gather data and host consultative sessions with several stakeholders including: -

- The Ministry of Local Government
- The Municipal Corporations
- Other Government Ministries
- Civil Society
- The Private Sector and
- The main political parties

Their preliminary reports were then presented to the previously-mentioned stakeholders at two workshops that took place early in August 2007. After the reports were reviewed by an Oversight Committee comprising officials from both the Ministry of Local Government and the UNDP, the consultants made a presentation to the Honourable Prime Minister and the Cabinet on January 9, 2008.

Since that time, a position document based on the consultants' findings was subjected to extensive discussions by a Cabinet sub-committee chaired by the Honourable Prime

Minister. A decision was then taken to first determine the roles and responsibilities of Municipal Corporations and later, the structure, organization and legal framework.

The mission of the Local Government Reform programme is to ‘’ facilitate the transformation and modernization of local communities by empowering citizens to participate in the decision-making process. In keeping with this mandate, the Ministry of Local Government will be hosting further stakeholder consultations during the month of May to communicate the broad objectives of the Reform Programme, its Vision, Mission, Core Values and key focal areas of the roles and responsibilities.

Within the context of the reform, these roles and responsibilities clearly chart a course towards more effective and efficient service delivery at the local level. They are modeled after the Vision 20/20 Draft National Strategic Plan, particularly the pillar that speaks to ‘‘Promoting Effective Government’’. We are saying that good governance promotes economic prosperity, social cohesion, strong participatory democracy and all-embracing community development.

The five core areas as outlined in the Green Paper are: -

- **Municipal Management** – This involves achieving operational efficiency in Finance, Information Communication Technology, Capital Infrastructural Assets Management and Human Resources.
- **Social Services** – The social, safety and security needs of the community will be addressed through the development of a vibrant community policing service. Additionally, the promotion of sport and culture in the development of sustainable communities will be extensive.
- **Economic Development** - We propose to facilitate commercially viable options and ventures in the areas of waste management, local tourism, agriculture and other areas that may emerge from within the community over time.
- **Environmental Management** - This involves facilitating the preparation and implementation of regional and local area development plans. The focus will be on sustainable activities that demonstrate care and concern for the environment.
- **Resilient Communities** – This involves creating more responsive communities using capacity and competency-building interventions... communities that can cope with unexpected and extreme events and respond creatively to economic, social and technological changes.

We propose to implement these initiatives within a new organizational structure for both the Municipal Corporations and the Ministry of Local Government. There are plans for a Council as a separate Local Assembly with a Presiding Officer, Councillors, Aldermen and Minority Leader and an Executive Council comprising an Executive Mayor or Chairman and Secretary drawn from the Council. Each Secretary is placed in charge of a department supervised by an Administrator with the Chief Administrator being the Administrative and Accounting Officer of the Executive Mayor or Chairman.

The proposed structure of the Ministry outlines ten main functional units, realigned in accordance with the Ministry’s main role in policy development and regional planning, management information systems, rendering technical assistance, ensuring that national standards are maintained and guiding the local government reform process.

Also included in the Consultants' reports are draft legislation provisions, inclusive of Constitutional Amendments for the protection of Local Government and the detailed provisions of the new Local Government System Act.

We are guided by our Reform vision – ***“Sustainable Local Communities rooted in the principles of robust, participative democracy; embracing all”***. The very essence of the Local Government Reform programme is in capturing each region's unique qualities and natural endowments and in nurturing the talents of its residents for the benefit of all in the community.

To this end, we welcome the public's comments and perspectives on this Green Paper, as the Ministry of Local Government prepares for implementation phase of the reform process.

Thank you.