

Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission

***Welcome Remarks at the
Opening Ceremony of the Council of Securities
Regulators of the Americas (COSRA)
Meeting***

October 29, 2012



**Address by: Professor Patrick K. Watson
Chairman, TTSEC
Hyatt Regency Hotel, Trinidad**

Salutations:

1. *Senator the Honourable Larry Howai, Minister of Finance and the Economy*
2. *Senator the Honourable Anand Ramlogan, SC, Attorney*
3. *The Honourable Rudranath Indarsingh, Minister in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy*
4. *Other Honourable Ministers of Government*
5. *Members of Parliament*
6. *Mr. Jwala Rambarran, Governor of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago*
7. *Mr. Maurice Suite, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and the Economy*
8. *Mr. Fernando Coloma-Correa, Chairman of Council of Securities Regulators of the Americas*
9. *Mr. Tajinder Singh, Deputy Secretary General, International Organisation of Securities Commission (IOSCO)*
10. *Commissioners of the Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission*
11. *Heads of Division of the Ministry of the Attorney General*
12. *Heads of Division of the Ministry of National Security*
13. *Heads of Business associations and chambers*
14. *Members of the Council of Securities Regulators of the Americas*
15. *Members of the Caribbean Group of Securities Regulators*
16. *Representatives of local and regional securities regulators*
17. *Other Specially Invited Guests*
18. *Members of the Media*
19. *Ladies and Gentlemen*

It is my distinct honour and privilege, as Chairman of the Trinidad and Tobago Securities and Exchange Commission, to welcome all of you to this 2012 Meeting of the Council of Securities Regulators of the Americas. A special welcome to those coming from abroad! The TTSEC is hosting this Meeting for the second time, the first time being in 2002, and it is an honour for us to do so.

Organisations such as IOSCO, COSRA and the Caribbean Group of Securities Regulators (CGSR) are important because they act as a forum for national regulators such as the TTSEC to cooperate with other regional and international regulatory organizations. COSRA, in particular, serves as a medium to bring to the fore issues that may have particular relevance to the securities regulators within the region.

Today, as many countries are still trying to recover from the global financial crisis which crippled many economies, these organizations provide the much needed support and guidance to their members and foster the promotion of the highest regulatory standards.

One of the more pressing issues currently faced by regulators, including the TTSEC, is the issue of legislation to address the dynamic challenges and intricacies of the present securities market. Before the financial crisis, many questioned the importance of regulation. Today, most will affirm that, in order to prevent the severe consequences of another crisis, and to ensure transparency and fairness in the market, there must be appropriate legislation to support the regulatory framework. This year, the TTSEC has been aggressively working on the Securities Bill 2012 to ensure that we have the requisite legislative authority to regulate the market effectively. This Bill will provide the Commission with:-

- Expanded functions and powers;
- Enhanced disclosure obligations from market actors;
- Provisions for greater confidentiality and information sharing with both local and international regulatory agencies;
- Enhanced enforcement capabilities, which include providing the Commission with the ability to access books, records and documents of market actors; and
- Greater regulatory oversight on the conduct within the market.

The revised Bill is also expected to meet the specific IOSCO criteria to allow the TTSEC to become an A List signatory of the MMOU and bring our legislation on par with international best practice. The TTSEC firmly believes that the proposed changes to the securities legislation will also make Trinidad and Tobago's capital market more attractive to local and foreign investors and redound to the benefit of the economy and the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We hope that the Bill will be tabled in both houses of Parliament before the end of the year in order to meet the IOSCO December 31 deadline.

At this juncture, I must thank the Minister of Finance and the Economy, Senator Larry Howai, who has recognised the urgent need for updated securities regulation and has given the assurance that this Bill will be piloted before the end of the year. It will also be remiss of me not to acknowledge the assistance of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel's Office, the Legislation Review Committee and the team from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy who have been working very closely with the TTSEC's team to ensure that we meet the deadline.

Over the past year, the Commission has also undertaken the task of finalising guidelines for the improvement of the market. These include the Repurchase Agreement Guidelines and the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML-CFT) Guidelines. It is our hope that these guidelines will ultimately facilitate a more stable and orderly market, where financial institutions adhere to more prudent practices and conduct their affairs with integrity and the highest standards.

Another focal area for the Commission is Investor Education. A key part of our mandate is the protection of the investor and the creation of a fair and proper environment to foster greater investments. It is against this backdrop that the Commission has enhanced its Investor Education programme, targeted at present and potential investors. As markets become more complex and dynamic, we have realised that investors must have access to relevant information.

Our programme uses new, digital and traditional media and focuses on developing a more literate financial consumer who can make informed and suitable personal investment decisions, while avoiding the pitfalls and dangers that may arise from unregistered financial products as well as various fraudulent schemes.

The 2012 COSRA Meeting will include panel discussions on the changing perspectives of corporate governance; the development of corporate bond markets; investor education as a key factor of capital market development; and the challenges and opportunities in facilitating capital financing in small and medium-sized enterprises.

I am of the firm belief that this meeting will provide the forum for meaningful discussions and foster productive dialogue on issues affecting our region and how we can move forward.

Once more, on behalf of the Board of Commissioners and staff of the Commission, I hope we have an enjoyable and productive meeting. To the visitors, do find some time to enjoy the warmth, hospitality and beauty of Trinidad & Tobago.

I thank you for the courtesy of your attention and I look forward to our interactions over the next two days.