

STATEMENT BY MR. KENNETH GORDON, COMMISSION CHAIRMAN
NEWS CONFERENCE IN THE BOARD ROOM
INTEGRITY COMMISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
MARCH 16, 2012

Thank you for joining us this morning.

1. Let me begin by emphasizing that this Press Conference has been called for the specific purpose of briefing you on how we propose to address the future. If there are other matters you may have also wished to discuss we must emphasize that this is not the time to do so. As significant as recent controversial developments may be, such matters are being addressed elsewhere and the process now underway must be respected.
2. As you are aware we propose to give you an update on our Strategic Plan for the period 2012–2015. Our team which included our Commissioners, the Registrar and his senior managers met on March 2nd and 3rd and the proposals which have emerged represent the foundation on which we intend to chart the course of the Commission into the future. Our task is to benefit from past experiences as we review our priorities. This was spelt out as far back as August 2010 by Cabinet. It was agreed then that the organizational structure of the Commission should be reviewed after three years to determine the adequacy of its structure and level of staff to achieve its strategic objectives. In light of this, the Commission is moving towards creation of a new permanent establishment by August 2013.
3. Our Retreat is the first step. While we identify our strategic plan for three years in the first instance, this is in recognition of the ongoing need to recalibrate our sights on an ongoing basis in a fast changing Trinidad and Tobago.
4. When we last met at the beginning of December 2011, we informed you that we were targeting a significant reduction in outstanding investigations which stood at thirty-eight [38] at November 1st 2011. It was our expectation that this would have been reduced to three [3] by the end of February 2012. This was not achieved for a combination of reasons. In fact the number outstanding at that date was twenty-one [21]. Since then another eleven [11] have been received, of which seven [7] have been completed. The current position is that some twenty-five [25] remain outstanding, as a result of additional complaints received. The net reduction from November 1st 2011 to the current position is 13 and the Commission is now working to ensure that complaints are dealt with within a period of three to four months.
5. We were more successful with our projected completion of Declarations which achieved the targeted number of 1602 by the end of December 2011, an increase of 143% over the previous year's 659. We are now left with the consolidated backlog of over 3300 uncertified declarations; 76% of these have already been reviewed by our Analysts, however we require additional information from declarants before we can certify these files. We have been seeking to improve the rate of response to our queries. This year we are employing a number of initiatives e.g. increased seminars and declarant meetings and where necessary, we will initiate legal action to enforce compliance so that all declarations received before December 31st 2011 are certified by the end of 2012.

6. I will now identify some of the more urgent proposals which have emerged from our Retreat and which are targeted for implementation during the course of the current year.
- *First the drafting and approval of Regulations.* We have erred in not having done this before for these will spell out the rules which will guide the Commission in a format that will reduce the prospect of misunderstanding. There is no short cut for getting this right and the exercise will ultimately have to be approved by affirmative resolution of Parliament. This exercise will be led by our In-house Counsel and is targeted to be completed by December 2012.
 - *Implementation of a programme to examine the practices and procedures of Statutory Bodies and State Enterprises.* This function of the Commission has never been addressed but we view it as most important. We first signaled the Commission's intention to commence this monitoring when we spoke to you in November 2011. We now propose to commence this exercise in April, 2012. I am pleased to introduce the Director of our Compliance Division, Mrs. Leigh-Ann Campbell who will be available to answer any questions you have in this regard. Mrs. Campbell will also be spearheading the Revision of the Declaration Forms and again will be available to deal with your questions.
 - *A word about the Revision of the Declaration Forms.* This too was signaled in November 2011 and the preliminary work has already begun. Again a process of approvals required but we are targeting completion by the end of the year.
- Confidentiality
- *We will review of the Confidentiality framework* under which the Commission has operated to determine where this may exceed what is required by the Integrity Act. This exercise will be spearheaded by In-house Counsel, Mr. Marlon Sambucharan.
 - *To Promote a clearer understanding of the role of the Integrity Commission* as it relates to the Constitution and the Law.
 - To give but one example of the importance of this proposal, neither the Integrity in Public Life Act nor the Prevention of Corruption Act is clear about whether the public utterance of a falsehood from whatever source is an offense against either Act. However Section 138 (2) (d) of the Constitution charges the Commission with the duty of monitoring and investigating conduct, practices and procedures which are "dishonest" and Section 5(1)(f) of the Act mandates the Commission to investigate the conduct of any person falling under the purview of the Commission which may be considered dishonest. These are quick examples of conflicting indications in the relevant legislation and there may be others. Clearly these problems need to be addressed and it is the intention of the Commission to commence the process. This exercise will require consultation with the Legal fraternity and we have already written to invite the Chief Justice to address the Commission on this issue at a time of his convenience. Our In-house Counsel will be responsible for coordinating wider discussion with the legal fraternity.
 - *To communicate the role of the Integrity Commission* more effectively to the society. We have made an important and successful start in schools. It is the objective of the Commission to expand on that start and to reach out to our wider public.
8. We have prepared a more detailed document which reports more fully on the recommendations of our strategic plan.
9. Those of you who would welcome copies of that more detailed Report can obtain one from Mr. Mervyn Crichlow, Chief Communications and Public Relations Officer.