MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE   21 December, 2020

Minister West: Collaborations key to ICT development in Tobago

Finding workable solutions to implementing Government's digital agenda was the order of the day as key officials from the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation (MPADT) and the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) met virtually to discuss strategies on Monday 21st December, 2020. The parties involved also deliberated on opportunities for shared services and collaborations, as well as strategies to address challenges posed to citizens and Government organisations alike by the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Senator Allyson West, Minister of Public Administration and Digital Transformation, "It is my hope that this engagement with Tobago, and all subsequent, will inform and influence the national approach to digital transformation, not only insofar as to ensure that no one is left disadvantaged by these change efforts, but to actively seek out and produce excellence in all areas of government's business." The Minister delivered her remarks virtually to a number of her colleagues which included contributions from Senator Hassel Bacchus, Minister in the Ministry; Mr. Ancil Dennis, Chief Secretary of the THA, Mr. Claudelle McKellar, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, along with presentations from representatives of iGovTT and the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (TATT).

Chief Secretary Dennis welcomed the prospect of collaborations in the future and supported Minister West's statements. He reiterated that Tobago needed to improve the ease of conducting business, where ICT was identified as a critical catalyst for success. Emerging global statistics have indeed supported the need for improved digital services and governance structures. According to the ITU's report on the *Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Digital Infrastructure*[i], countries that have more robust ICT infrastructures were in better positions to address the economic fallouts and mitigate negative circumstances caused by the pandemic. Minister West said that the dream of a 'digital society' was set in motion but had to be further expedited to meet the needs of citizens. She reassured that Government's digital agenda will continue to follow the roadmap articulated in the ***ICT Blueprint: National ICT Plan 2018-2022,*** which specifically outlines plans for Tobago's development.

As part of the digitalisation process, the Ministry has been working on a number of key projects that aim to bridge the digital divide in Trinidad and Tobago. Among them are the e-Identity project, an interoperability platform for shared data among Government organisations, e-service delivery, access projects that introduce ICT infrastructure to underserved areas, the establishment of a Government data centre and digital skills capacity building.

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[i] https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/GSR/2020/Documents/GSR-20_Impact-COVID-19-on-digital-economy_DiscussionPaper.pdf

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