

**REMARKS BY  
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OAS REPRESENTATIVE  
AT THE RECOGNITION CEREMONY  
FOR THE CERTIFIED FRONT DESK REPRESENTATIVES**

**Thursday, July 28, 2011**

Director of Policy and Planning Courthwright Marshall,  
Manager of Tourism Education Cynthia Simon,  
Minister of religion Rev. Olson Daniel,  
General Manager of Antigua Hotels Association Mr. Neil Forrester,  
Distinguished Certified Front Desk Reps,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In times such as these when good news other than the gospel is a rare commodity, it is refreshing to celebrate the success of the new batch of Antigua certified front desk representatives. This is a day of rejoicing not only for yourselves who invested time, attention and energy to your training, but also for the tourism industry in Antigua and Barbuda, as well as the Organization of American States, given its commitment and support to excellence and sustainability in this vital sector.

As you know, this accomplishment of yours results from the priority given by the Antigua government to the tourism industry and its strategy to promote and deliver training for growth and competitiveness. I wish to thank the Ministry of Tourism, in particular the Manager of Tourism Education Ms. Cynthia Simon, for this milestone in the "Tourism training and certification project". My gratitude also goes to facilitator Louise John, who once more showed her excellent teaching capacity, as you unanimously passed the American Hospitality and Lodging Education Institute (AH&LEI)'s exam.

I believe this morning's auspicious event occurs just at the right moment. Just recently, at the end of June 2011, the OAS held a preparatory meeting for the

19<sup>th</sup> Inter-American Travel Congress and put together a draft declaration on sustainable tourism development in the Americas. It also identified subject areas to be financed by the Special Multilateral Fund of the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (FEMCIDI). Issues such as competitiveness, ecotourism, sustainability, and dialogue between the public and private sectors appear high on the agenda of the 19<sup>th</sup> congress to take place in San Salvador, 29-30 September 2011.

You will realize that tourism is important not just for Antigua and Barbuda or the Caribbean, but the entirety of the Americas. In such an environment, excellence, professionalism, hard work, dedication and empathy are the tools that can give an edge.

In many ways, the training you have benefited from is a game changer. You have come to understand that success is not a destination, but a journey. Doing the right thing no matter what, smiling in the face of indifference or contempt, keeping calm and serene in the face of anger and brutality, believing in good results even in rough times, choosing to be content regardless of external circumstances, that is success. Now if you apply these skills, if you elevate yourselves to the standards you were taught, if you draw professional satisfaction in serving well your customers and brightening their days, then you will become ornate pillars in the tourism mansion of Antigua and Barbuda.

More than that, if you extend the application of these skills to your family, friends and neighbors, then the entire society will become even more gracious and more harmonious, as the gross national happiness in Antigua will soar awesomely.

I already picture you as royal palm trees that grow straight, majestic and gracious despite the different tropisms that try to bend them. Nothing, nobody should be allowed to derail you from the path of right principles you learnt. As you know, integrity, kindness and magnanimity are the marks of royalty. In fact, it is by keeping on the grace, majesty and straightness of the royal palm tree that

you will honor the investment that the OAS and the government of Antigua and Barbuda have made in your training and future.

In times such as these, we need your great service to be the magnet that attracts visitors to Antigua and Barbuda. We need you to be among the most gracious faces and brightest smiles in Antigua and the Caribbean. We need you to be the change you want to see in your country. In short, we want you to be leaders in your trade in the Americas, and an inspiration to your fellow citizens.

Yes we are celebrating this morning, but we are also expecting. We are expecting a good return on our faith in your great potential, we are expecting that thanks to your contribution, the Antiguan tourism industry will become an example of best practices in the Americas, we are expecting your increased performance will serve to boost international cooperation for the benefit of our region. It is with these expectations that the OAS will remain engaged in the hemisphere to expand the advantages of capacity building.

Now you may think that your certification takes you to a new high in your career. Yet you must always keep in mind a simple truth, nothing is gained and kept best once for all. You will need to review the tools, you will need to be always conscious of the standards, and on top of all you will need to practice, because right practice makes perfect. You have become givers. You have learnt the value of a smile, give it. You are aware of the importance of kindness and patience, give them. You have been trained to pay professional attention to each and every one of your institution's customers, give it.

When you do all that, when the sweet music of excellence sounds everywhere in Antigua, you will automatically elevate the tourism industry to a higher dimension, which will confirm you as nation builders. Enjoy this wonderful moment keeping in mind you are on your way to make the OAS and Antigua and Barbuda proud.

Thank you and God bless you all!