

 **Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**

Ministry of Finance and the Economy

**Communications Unit**

**Media Release**

 **Private Members Club (PMC)**

13th August, 2013

In the 2013 Budget Presentation, specific mention was made of measures that are to be put into place to govern the local gaming industry, with specific reference to the longer term objective of introducing a comprehensive framework for the governance of the industry.

Over the years Private Members’ Clubs have been engaging in Casino type activities and according to the international regulatory body, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which continues to monitor the local industry, by 2009 the sector consisted of close to 70 operational Private Members’ Clubs.

To ensure that our regulatory environment meets with international standards and to avoid Trinidad and Tobago’s regulatory compliance reputation not being impaired, immediate efforts have to be undertaken to complement the role of the Financial Intelligence Unit in implementing a comprehensive regulatory framework.

In keeping with Anti-Money Laundering/ Counter Terrorist Financing requirements (AML/CTF), the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has been working assiduously to establish a framework to address the regulatory and social concerns arising from the proliferation of Private Members’ Clubs’ provision of casino style games to club members.

A new comprehensive legislative framework will be put in place that promotes responsible gambling and protects the vulnerable. The Ministry also understands that apart from the Private Members’ Clubs’ devices, there may exist in excess of 25,000 Video games and devices operating in bars and recreational pubs across the country.

The proposed legislation is intended to be a modern, responsible gaming code that recognizes the fact that people enjoy gambling as a form of entertainment. At the same time, one must acknowledge that there are inherent dangers that need to be addressed in terms of problems resulting from gambling and its effect on vulnerable groups.

Therefore three important standards will be embedded in the new legislation. These are:

* the vulnerable will be protected,
* that gambling should, in all respects, be fairly and openly conducted and,
* its operation must be within the ambit of the law.

The Minister of Finance and the Economy has established a Working Group to consider draft legislation for the legal and regulatory framework for the gaming industry. The proposed Working Group includes representatives from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, Ministry of Trade and Investment, Ministry of National Security, Ministry of the People and Social Development and the Office of the Attorney General.

In the interest of openness, transparency, accountability and involvement, focused stakeholders’ consultations have been planned and the services of an internationally-recognized consultant have been sought to provide technical and legal advisory services to the Working Group.

A Civil Society Group has also been established comprising representatives from relevant social welfare groups, ICATT, the Law Association and the Banking Sector. Consultations will be held with key stakeholder groups from the Gaming Industry which itself has expressed interest in becoming legitimized and governed within an established regulatory environment. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy will seek to establish a relationship with all key stakeholder groups as it encourages harmonization in the overall process which is critical for us in order to achieve our stated objectives.

Recommendations emanating from this process will provide the necessary feedback for the implementation of a modern and effective framework for the gambling and gaming industry, while also ensuring that the welfare of all parties involved (directly or indirectly) is properly taken into account.

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