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For Immediate Release

**RIC INTRODUCES TOUGH TRANSPARENCY &
ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS**

On Friday 25th February 2011 the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) shared its initial thinking on regulatory mechanisms to improve transparency and accountability when the commission launched the first in a series of public education symposia under its **Symposium Series** at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. At this first symposium, entitled “Advancing Transparency & Accountability in the Electricity, Water and Wastewater Sectors” the RIC highlighted the transparency tools and accountability measures it proposes to adopt to improve its capacity to monitor service providers’ actions and promote equitable access to utility services. The feature address “Toward Greater Transparency & Accountability in State-owned Utilities” was delivered by the Honourable Emmanuel George, Minister of Public Utilities who underscored that the Ministry “endorses any measure that will allow the public utilities in T&T to become more accountable for their performance and make them more transparent in their operations.”

The matter of transparency and accountability has become increasingly relevant as evidenced by many governments, advocacy groups and international agencies dedicating substantial resources to identifying and deterring corrupt practices. Having oversight responsibility for the electricity, water and wastewater sectors the RIC has taken a leading role in shaping these sectors by promoting good governance and ensuring that there is an adequate level of transparency and accountability. This is apparent by the specific tools the RIC proposes to introduce in six broad areas namely, Consultation, Information disclosure, Openness: making service providers answerable to consumers, Ethics and Integrity, Promoting assessment and monitoring and Institutional and governance arrangements.

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The RIC's proposed measures postulate a number of radical mechanisms which include among others:

- making information dealing with planning and development activities available to the public via the service provider websites;
- providing quarterly revenue and expenditure statements in accordance with guidelines established by the RIC and making these accessible to the public and the media;
- providing information on key performance indicators, including the number of complaints. This info to be provided with bills at least twice per year received and service providers' effectiveness in dealing with those complaints;
- publishing the salaries and other benefits of senior management annually;
- declaring all foreign trips and expenses incurred by Board Members and management annually;
- disclosure of the identity of all contractors, the value of the contracts and the main evaluation criteria used to select the contractor;
- Codes of conduct for staff; and
- Holding of annual public meetings to allow the public to question the Board and the CEO.

By adopting these specific proposals the RIC believes that service providers can gain credibility and trust, thereby enhancing support from stakeholders. Commenting on the RIC's measures, Minister George indicated these "would represent a complete shift in the paradigm under which the utility sector has operated in T&T. It involves a movement from insularity...to one of openness...it is a movement from self service to service of the people." Additionally, representatives of the service providers as well as a number of respected and influential agencies, including Transparency International of T&T, also expressed their appreciation of the proposed interventions.

As a regulator, the RIC holds that transparency and accountability are hallmarks of good regulation and leads by example by creating self-imposed guidelines similar to the requirements being suggested for service providers. The full document is available on the RIC's website.

End of Release.

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L-R: Harjinder Atwal, Executive Director RIC, Dr. Anne-Marie Mohammed, Chairman – Board of Commissioners RIC and Senator, the Honourable Emmanuel George, Minister of Public Utilities at the launch of the Symposium Series 2011.