

**ADDRESS BY HON. COLM IMBERT, MP, MINISTER OF FINANCE**  
**AT THE OFFICIAL COMMEMORATION CEREMONY**  
**FOR THE PRACTICAL COMPLETION**  
**OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW TERMINAL AT THE**  
**ANR ROBINSON INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, TOBAGO**

**MARCH 15, 2025**

Dr. the Hon Keith Rowley, Prime Minister and MP for Diego Martin West

Hon. Stuart Young, Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, MP for Port of Spain North/St Ann's East and our incoming Prime Minister

Hon. Sen. Rohan Sinanan, Minister of Works and Transport and his Staff

Hon. Shamfa Cudjoe, Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs and MP for Tobago West

Hon. Ayanna Webster-Roy, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister and MP for Tobago East

Hon. Farley Augustine, Chief Secretary, Tobago House of Assembly  
Other Members of the House of Assembly and Management of the Assembly

Chairman, Board and Management, Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago

Chairman, Board and Management of the National Infrastructure Development Company

Staff of the Ministry of Finance

Other Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honored to stand here today at the historic celebration of the practical completion of the construction of the new terminal building at the A.N.R. Robinson International Airport: a moment that marks a new era of connectivity and growth for Tobago and our country. This is the fulfillment of a promise made by this Administration to the people of Tobago. For decades, Tobago has yearned for an international airport facility that matches its status as a premier destination; now, the vision has become a reality.

You may wonder what is the role of the Ministry of Finance in this project, since the ministry is not normally responsible for airport development. The answer is straightforward - after a number of stops and starts and several unsuccessful attempts over the years to construct a modern international airport in Tobago, Cabinet decided in December 2017 that the Ministry of Finance should be take the lead as the Client Ministry in this project because of its complexity and cost, especially since significant land acquisition, costing hundreds of millions of dollars, was required. Initially the project was envisaged as a Public-Private-Partnership, using a Build-Own-Lease-Transfer (BOLT) arrangement. However, it soon became clear that that approach, although less onerous on the Treasury, would take a long time to develop into an actual construction project.

Accordingly, in view of the importance of the Project, Cabinet in September 2018 decided that the Project would be fully funded by the Government and be implemented using a traditional Design-Build approach. Cabinet also approved the National Infrastructure Development Company (NIDCO) as the Executing Agency for the Project and a Project Committee involving all stakeholders was established. Our role in Finance, therefore, was and is, firstly to arrange

funding for the project, most of which has come from general revenues, but equally importantly, as the Client Ministry, to ensure that all involved worked together for a common purpose, so that upon completion, the new Airport Terminal Building and Airside Works could be handed over in the shortest possible time to the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to manage and operate.

I wish to stress that today, we are celebrating the practical completion of the Airport Terminal Building. In the context of construction projects, "practical completion" signifies the point where the building works are ***substantially complete and reasonably fit for the intended use***, even if some outstanding works remain. This does not mean that aircraft and passengers can utilize the new Terminal Building from tomorrow morning, since final completion of all remaining elements of construction is expected by the end of next month, with final testing and commissioning immediately thereafter, but it is a significant milestone in the life of any project.

The Airports Authority is already well advanced in its preparation for the commissioning phase of the Project, using expert international airport consultants, and we expect, therefore, barring unforeseen circumstances, that the first plane with passengers can utilize this new Terminal Building in July 2025

The old Crown Point terminal served Tobago for years, but it struggled to keep up with Tobago's tourism growth. To unlock Tobago's full potential, modern infrastructure was required. This understanding drove us several years ago to embark on this milestone project that would remove those constraints and become a catalyst for Tobago's prosperity for generations to come.

## **Scope of Works and Infrastructure Upgrades**

From the beginning, we set out to build more than just a terminal building. This project was designed to enhance and transform the entire airport facility. On the airside, new taxiways and expanded aircraft parking aprons have been constructed, and taxiway lighting, and robust drainage systems installed to prevent flooding. These upgrades will allow the airport in Tobago to accommodate larger aircraft and more flights, with enhanced safety and efficiency.

On the landside, there are new internal roadways and spacious parking areas for vehicles, thus improving traffic flow inside the airport. Additionally, the surrounding grounds were carefully landscaped to reflect Tobago's natural beauty and create a lasting first impression.

At the heart of the project is, of course, the new terminal building itself, a state-of-the-art facility designed to meet global standards while reflecting the spirit of Tobago. The new terminal is equipped with air bridges to provide passengers with a comfortable and sheltered boarding and disembarking experience. A FIRST IN TOBAGO!

A high-tech baggage handling system has been installed to efficiently manage the luggage from bag drop-off to collection. Modern security screening equipment, spacious departure lounges, duty-free retail spaces, and dining facilities have all been integrated to greatly enhance passenger experience. All systems and features have been chosen and designed with service, safety, and convenience in mind, from advanced air conditioning and ventilation systems to energy-efficient lighting and elevators. In short, this project upgraded every facet of the airport, creating a modern gateway of which Tobago could be proud.

Indeed, when commissioned in a few months, this airport will rank among the best in the entire Latin American and Caribbean Region

### **Financial Oversight & Fiscal Responsibility**

A project of this magnitude demanded the highest standards of financial oversight and accountability. From inception, this Administration has been steadfast in ensuring that the people of Trinidad and Tobago obtain maximum value for money from this development.

It is worth highlighting that international benchmarking shows this project's cost efficiency compared to other airport developments in the region and around the world. The findings are remarkable. On a cost-per-square-meter basis, this terminal was delivered at approximately **US\$6,000 per m<sup>2</sup>**, significantly below the Caribbean regional average of roughly **US\$11,200 per m<sup>2</sup>** and the global average of approximately **US\$13,800 per m<sup>2</sup>**.

In other words, we have built **more** for **less**. The story is similar when we look at **the cost per passenger**: our project's cost works out to roughly **US\$53 per annual passenger** capacity, whereas comparable airport projects average about **US\$177 per passenger** in the Caribbean region and about **US\$300 per passenger** globally. These numbers underscore that we have achieved exceptional value for money, delivering world-class infrastructure at a fraction of the usual cost. Indeed, our new Tobago terminal ranks among the most cost-effective airport projects in the world.

It is worth noting that we built this new Airport Terminal Building during a global pandemic and during a period when global construction costs rose sharply; supply chain disruptions caused material shortages and price spikes, and a tight labor market drove up wages.

As you will see when you walk through the building, this new Airport Terminal is **HUGE** and has several innovative modern features, equipment and systems that even our main international airport in Piarco in Trinidad does not have. It has been designed for the future, to accommodate **THREE TIMES** as many passengers that currently use the A.N.R. International Airport in Tobago.

### **Compliance to International standards**

More importantly, this new terminal is built to the highest international standards while also embracing and complying with the standards of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and International Air Transport Association (IATA). Efficiency, comfort, and safety at this airport will now be on par with leading international airports.

We also made environmental sustainability a core priority. This facility is designed to be eco-friendly and energy efficient. It incorporates features, such as solar panels, energy-saving LED lighting, and high-efficiency climate control systems, to reduce energy use. Water conservation measures, including rainwater collection and low-flow plumbing, have also been implemented to reduce water wastage. Sustainable building materials and strict waste management have been applied to minimize the environmental impacts. The terminal is thus on track to receive LEED certification, an acronym for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, which is the world's most widely

used green building rating system. Tobago's unspoiled beauty is part of what makes this island special, and the Project Team has worked hard to deliver an airport terminal that, in its "green" design, respects and preserves the natural heritage.

### **Community Impact and Economic Growth**

One early challenge was land acquisition. To build this terminal and its support facilities, we needed additional land at Crown Point. This meant asking a number of residents and business owners to relocate from the properties they had called home for their lifetime. The land acquisition was not an easy task, but absolutely necessary, so we persevered, and I would like to thank all those citizens who were affected for their contribution to the success we celebrate today.

Beyond bricks and mortar, this project has always been about our people. The construction phase provided jobs and training for many Tobagonians. At the peak of construction, hundreds of local workers were employed onsite. Local businesses provided materials, transportation, and services, ensuring that economic benefits were widely distributed. Workers gained valuable experience and income and their hard work is now forever embedded in these walls. I wish to therefore recognize and thank all the workers and contractors who made their best efforts in this project. You have built more than an airport; you have built pride in Tobago in a collective effort.

### **Future Vision – A Gateway to Global Connectivity and Growth**

Now, what does this new terminal mean for Tobago's future? It means opportunity on a scale we have never seen before; it is a gateway to the world for Tobago and a cornerstone of our future development. With

the completion of this project, Tobago is now firmly positioned for long-term growth. We have given Tobago the tools to dramatically increase its global connectivity. International airlines can now include Tobago on their routes with confidence, knowing that you have the capacity to handle their aircraft and passengers with efficiency. This enhanced connectivity opens the door for Tobago to tap into new tourism markets and host international events, conferences, and sporting competitions that were previously beyond your reach due to logistical constraints. The terminal is designed to handle up to **3,000,000 passengers per year** with a peak hourly traffic capacity of over 1,000 passengers, creating the room we need for growth in arrivals and travel demand.

With this facility, Tobago will be able to welcome more direct long-haul flights from major international markets, opening our doors to visitors from North America, Europe, and beyond. More flights will mean more tourists, and more tourists will mean more business for everyone: hotels, restaurants, taxi drivers, tour operators, small businesses and artisans, creating at peak, thousands of new jobs and income for Tobagonians across many sectors.

The benefits extend beyond tourism. A better airport also improves conditions for business travel and cargo. Investors will see our improved infrastructure as a sign of a business-friendly environment that could lead to new ventures on the island. You will be better positioned to host international conferences, cultural events, and sporting events, as we can now efficiently handle the travel logistics that come with them. This new airport terminal will also raise Tobago's international profile, putting the island on the map as never before.



Throughout the region, airport expansion and development has always been a catalyst for economic development, particularly in the areas of tourism, industry and trade. Every country in Latin America and the Caribbean that has developed its international airports has benefited tremendously. We expect nothing less in Tobago and the projections for increased tourist arrivals indicate an increase of up to 50% in arrivals in Tobago within the first few years as a result of this new state of the art airport facility.

Even as we celebrate today, we remain focused on ensuring that this terminal is fully ready and optimized for operations. In recent months, the Project Team and the Airports Authority have been rigorously testing systems and training staff, to fine-tune operations. In the next few months every system – from check-in and security to baggage handling, will be tested and verified ready for full operation.

Along with the new terminal, the old terminal will be repurposed into a dedicated cargo and administrative center, so that for the first time, Tobago will have a dedicated cargo terminal, allowing goods to move in and out by air with far greater efficiency. This is a tremendous opportunity for local businesses to expand their reach to international markets and improve their supply of goods to the island.

## **Conclusion**

Ladies and gentlemen, as I conclude, I want to emphasize what a milestone this is for Tobago and for our nation. This new terminal is momentous and it is fitting that this airport bears the name of A.N.R. Robinson – one of Tobago's great leaders who always believed in your

potential. It shows what we can achieve when we put Tobago's needs at the forefront.

I extend my deepest gratitude to everyone who has made this project possible. I thank the Prime Minister, Dr. the Hon. Keith Rowley, and my Cabinet colleagues for believing in this vision. The Prime Minister in particular has been a driving force and hard taskmaster behind this project from day one. I also wish to thank all the agencies involved - NIDCO, China Railway and all its local subcontractors, the many consultants and every worker who toiled to build this terminal. I also thank the people of Tobago for their patience, cooperation, and faith throughout this journey.

I thank you.