

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PUBLIC STATEMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS IN COMPLIANCE WITH SECTIONS 7, 8 AND 9 OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA), 1999 (CHAP 22:02)

In accordance with Sections 7, 8 and 9 of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 1999 (Chap 22:02), the **Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs**, being a public authority, is required by law to publish the following statements which list the documents and information generally available to the public.

The FOIA gives members of the public:

- 1) A legal right for each person to access information held by the Ministry;
- 2) A legal right for each person to have official information relating to him/herself amended where it is incomplete, incorrect or misleading;
- 3) A legal right to obtain reasons for adverse decisions made regarding an applicant's request for information under the FOIA; and
- 4) A legal right to complain to the Ombudsman and to apply to the High Court for Judicial Review to challenge adverse decisions made under the FOIA.

SECTION 7

Section 7 (1) (a) (i)

FUNCTION AND STRUCTURE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS

The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, established in 1962, serves as the external arm of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and conducts the country's foreign relations with other states and international entities mainly through diplomatic initiatives and representation. The foreign policy of the country is pursued through the activities of the Ministry's Headquarters, Overseas Missions and Honorary Consulates.

The Ministry is responsible for the following:

- Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Affairs (wider Caribbean)
- Consular and Protocol Services
- External Relations
- Overseas Missions
- Treaties

Headquarters

The Ministry's Headquarters comprise:

- **Minister's Secretariat**
- **Permanent Secretary's Secretariat**
 - Multilateral Relations Division
 - Finance and Accounts Unit
- **Deputy Permanent Secretary (I) Secretariat**
 - Human Resource Services Division
 - Office Management Section

- Property Management Unit
- Missions Inspectorate and Administration Unit
- Policy and Planning Division
- Treaties, International Agreements and Legal Division

➤ **Deputy Permanent Secretary (II)**

- Corporate Communications Unit
- Information Technology Unit
- Library
- Registry Section
- Records Management Section
- CARICOM and Caribbean Affairs Division (of which the CARICOM Single Market and Economy [CSME] Unit is a sub-unit)
- Consular Affairs Division
- Protocol Division

➤ **Director, Bilateral Relations**

- Africa, Asia, Middle East and the Pacific Division
- Americas Division
- European Affairs Division

Overseas Missions

At present, there are twenty (20) Overseas Missions that are charged with protecting and promoting the interests of Trinidad and Tobago in the international arena. The newest Mission was officially opened in February 2020 in Georgetown, Guyana. The Overseas Missions are as follows:

- The Embassies in Beijing, Brasilia, Brussels, Caracas, Havana, San José, Panama City, Washington D.C. (Permanent Mission to the Organization of American States);
- The High Commissions in Abuja, Georgetown, Kingston, London, New Delhi, Ottawa, and Pretoria;
- The Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York and Geneva; and
- The Consulates General in Miami, New York and Toronto.

Honorary Consuls

The Ministry has engaged the services of Honorary Consuls to represent the interests of Trinidad and Tobago where there is no diplomatic or consular representation. These Honorary Consuls are located in:

- The Americas: Bolivia [La Paz], Brazil [Goias, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Pará], Canada [Manitoba, Saskatchewan], Colombia [Bogotá], Dominica [Roseau], Dominican Republic [Santo Domingo], Ecuador [Quito], Grenada [St. George's], Guatemala [Guatemala City], Paraguay [Asunción], Peru [Lima], Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis [Basseterre], Suriname [Paramaribo], United States of America [Texas and California];
- Europe: Denmark [Copenhagen], Finland [Helsinki], France [Paris], Germany [Bonn, Hamburg], Italy [Rome], Norway [Oslo], Russian Federation [Moscow], Slovak Republic, and Turkey [Istanbul];
- Africa: Ghana [Tema];
- Asia: People's Republic of China [Hong Kong], the Republic of Korea [Seoul], and Singapore [Pulau Ujong]; and
- The Middle East: Lebanon [Tripoli].

Section 7 (1) (a) (ii)

CATEGORIES OF DOCUMENTS IN THE POSSESSION OF THE MINISTRY

- Files dealing with administrative support and general administrative documents for the operations of the Ministry
- Policy and procedure documents
- Documents relating to the strategic review of the Ministry
- Cabinet documents
- Personnel files detailing, *inter alia*, staff appointments, job specifications, promotions, transfers and leave
- Files dealing with training and technical cooperation as well as training plans
- Files dealing with accounting and financial matters
- Financial records such as cheques, vouchers, receipts and journals
- Files relating to the procurement of supplies, services and equipment
- Inventories
- Media releases and speeches originating in the Ministry
- Files dealing with official functions, conferences and events hosted and attended by the Ministry
- Internal and external correspondence files
- Complaint and suggestion files
- Registers and certificates
- Legislation, legal instruments and legal opinions
- Briefing documents
- Diplomatic lists
- Reports: annual, audit, consultants' and technical, among others
- Minutes and agenda of meetings
- Books, periodicals, publications, leaflets, pamphlets, brochures, posters, newspaper clippings, notices and bulletins
- Maps, charts, photographs, compact discs, usb flash drives, diskettes, abstracts, tapes and catalogues,

Section 7 (1) (a) (iii)

MATERIAL PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION OR INSPECTION

The public may inspect and/or obtain copies of the following material from the Designated Officer (please refer to Section 7 [1] [a] [vi]) between the hours of 8:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. from Monday to Thursday and 8:15 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. on Friday:

- Addresses/statements by the Honourable Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs
- Addresses/statements by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry
- Statements by Heads of Mission
- Press releases
- Communiqués from: Conferences of the Heads of Government of CARICOM and meetings, conferences of United Nations bodies and meetings of regional and hemispheric bodies (e.g. OAS, ACS).
- Guidelines on the movement of professionals within CARICOM

The public can also access the Ministry's website at www.foreign.gov.tt.

Section 7 (1) (a) (iv)

LITERATURE AVAILABLE BY SUBSCRIPTION

The Ministry has no literature available by way of subscription.

Section 7 (1) (a) (v)

PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN ACCESSING A DOCUMENT FROM THE MINISTRY

Requesting Information

General Procedure

The policy of the Ministry is to answer all requests for information, both oral and written. However, in order to have the rights given to the public under the FOIA (for example the right to challenge a decision if a request for information is refused), one must make a request in writing. The applicant must complete the appropriate form for information that is not readily available to the public. In this regard, the Request for Access to Official Documents form is available online at http://www.foia.gov.tt/sites/default/files/FOIA_Request_Form.pdf.

Addressing Requests

To facilitate prompt handling of requests, applications must be addressed to the Designated Officer (please refer to Section 7 [1] [a] [vi]).

Details in the Request

Applicants should provide details that will allow for ready identification and location of the records that are being requested. If insufficient information is provided clarification will be sought. If the applicant is not sure how to write the request or what details to include, he/she must communicate with the Designated Officer.

Requests Not Handled under the FOIA

A request under the FOIA will not be processed to the extent that it asks for information that is readily available to the public, either from this Ministry or from another public authority. These may include, *inter alia*, brochures, pamphlets and reports.

How the Ministry Responds to Requests

Retrieving Documents

The Ministry is required to furnish copies of documents only when these are in its possession or can be retrieved from storage. Information stored in the National Archives or at another storage centre will be retrieved in order to process your request.

Furnishing Documents

An applicant is entitled to copies of documents that are in the possession, custody or power of the Ministry. The Ministry is required to furnish only one copy of a document. If a legible copy of an original document cannot be made, no attempt will be made to reconstruct it. In such circumstances, the best copy possible will be furnished with its quality being noted in the Ministry's reply.

Please note that the Ministry is **not** compelled to do the following:

- 1) Create new documents. For example, a new programme will not be written so that a computer will print information in the format preferred by the applicant.
- 2) Perform research for an applicant.

Time Limits

The FOIA sets a time limit of thirty (30) calendar days for the determination of a request for access to documents. If this deadline cannot be reached, the FOIA gives you the right to proceed as though the request has been denied. The Ministry will try diligently to comply with the time limit. If it appears that processing the request may take longer than the statutory limit, the request will be acknowledged and the applicant will be advised of its status.

Since there is a possibility that requests may be incorrectly addressed or misdirected, the applicant may wish to call or write to confirm that the request has been received and to ascertain its status.

If a decision is taken to grant access to the information requested, the applicant will be permitted to inspect the documents and/or be provided with copies.

Section 7 (1) (a) (vi)

OFFICERS IN THE MINISTRY RESPONSIBLE FOR *(1) THE INITIAL RECEIPT OF AND ACTION UPON NOTICES UNDER SECTION 10 OF THE FOIA, *(2) REQUESTS FOR ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS UNDER SECTION 13 OF THE FOIA, AND *(3) APPLICATIONS FOR CORRECTIONS OF PERSONAL INFORMATION UNDER SECTION 36 OF THE FOIA

Designated Officer

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Secondary Designated Officer

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Section 7 (1) (a) (vii)

ADVISORY BOARDS, COUNCILS, COMMITTEES, AND OTHER BODIES WHERE MEETINGS/MINUTES ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

At present, there are no bodies in the Ministry that fall within the meaning of this section of the FOIA.

Section 7 (1) (a) (viii)

LIBRARY/READING ROOM FACILITIES

The Library is available for reading documents, journals, articles and books.

SECTION 8

Section 8 (1) (a) (i)

DOCUMENTS CONTAINING INTERPRETATIONS OR PARTICULARS OF WRITTEN LAWS OR SCHEMES ADMINISTERED BY THE MINISTRY, NOT BEING PARTICULARS CONTAINED IN ANOTHER WRITTEN LAW

- Treaties
- Conventions
- Memoranda

Section 8 (1) (a) (ii)

MANUALS, RULES OF PROCEDURE, STATEMENTS OF POLICY, RECORDS OF DECISIONS, LETTERS OF ADVICE TO PERSONS OUTSIDE THE MINISTRY, OR SIMILAR DOCUMENTS CONTAINING RULES, POLICIES, GUIDELINES, PRACTICES OR PRECEDENTS

The following internal documents can be made available for inspection only upon request to the Designated Officer (see Section 7 [1] [a] [vi]):

- Organizational Handbook
- Handbook for Officers on Transfer

Section 8 (1) (b)

DOCUMENTS OUTLINING THE PROCEDURES TO BE EMPLOYED OR THE OBJECTIVES TO BE PURSUED IN ENFORCING WRITTEN LAWS OR SCHEMES ADMINISTERED BY THE MINISTRY WHERE THE PUBLIC MIGHT BE DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THAT ENFORCEMENT

- Information documents prepared with respect to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Free Movement of Persons Act, 1997

SECTION 9

Section 9 (1) (a) – (b)

There are no documents to be published under these subsections at this time.

Section 9 (1) (c)

A REPORT OR STATEMENT CONTAINING THE ADVICE OR RECOMMENDATIONS OF AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE WHOSE MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES AN OFFICER OF THE MINISTRY

- Submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf
- Report by the Marine Scientific Research Sub-Committee
- Reports of the Inter-sectoral Committee on a Marine Pollution Prevention and Compensation Regime for Trinidad and Tobago
- Reports of the Working Group to Determine the Implications of Global Warming, Climate Change and Sea Level Rise
- Report of the Bilateral Oil Spill Committee
- Report by the Inter-Ministerial International Humanitarian Law Committee
- Report of the Trade Negotiations Committee

- Reports of the Inter-Ministerial Consultative Committee on the CARICOM Single Market and Economy
- Report of the CARICOM Trade Support Programme of Trinidad and Tobago
- Reports of the Business and Labour Advisory Committee
- Report of the Bilingual Steering Committee
- Minutes of Meetings of the National Commission for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Sections 9 (1) (d) – (g)

There are no documents to be published under these subsections at this time.

Section 9 (1) (h)

A REPORT ON THE PERFORMANCE OR EFFICIENCY OF THE MINISTRY, OR OF AN OFFICE, DIVISION OR BRANCH OF THE MINISTRY, WHETHER THE REPORT IS OF A GENERAL NATURE OR CONCERNS A PARTICULAR POLICY, PROGRAMME OR PROJECT

- Report by Auditor General on the Ministry
- Annual Reports of the departments at Headquarters and of the Overseas Missions
- Reports on the Major Achievements of the departments at Headquarters and of the Overseas Missions
- Ministerial Performance Management Framework Report of the Ministry

Section 9 (1) (i)

A REPORT CONTAINING FINAL PLANS OR PROPOSALS FOR ^{*(1)} THE RE-ORGANIZATION OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE MINISTRY, ^{*(2)} THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW POLICY, PROGRAMME OR PROJECT TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE MINISTRY, OR ^{*(3)} THE ALTERATION OF AN EXISTING POLICY, PROGRAMME OR PROJECT ADMINISTERED BY THE MINISTRY, WHETHER OR NOT THE PLANS OR PROPOSALS ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY AN OFFICER OF THE MINISTRY, ANOTHER PUBLIC AUTHORITY, THE RESPONSIBLE MINISTER OR CABINET

There are no documents to be published under this subsection at this time.

Section 9 (1) (j)

A STATEMENT PREPARED WITHIN THE MINISTRY AND CONTAINING POLICY DIRECTIONS FOR THE DRAFTING OF LEGISLATION

- Report on the establishment of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy
- Report on the establishment of the Caribbean Court of Justice

Section 9 (1) (k) – (m)

There are no documents to be published under these subsections at this time.