

**Launch of the Ten-Year National Development Plan for the Turks and Caicos
Islands
Providenciales, Turk and Caicos Islands, October 27, 2005
Statement By
Hon. Dr. Michael E. Misick, LLB, MLC, Chief Minister & Minister of Development**

Chairman, HE Mahala Wynns, Acting Governor, Other Members of Executive Council, Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Department, Members of the Ten Year Development Plan Committee, Members of the Press, Members of the Clergy, Ladies and Gentlemen, Boy and Girls.

Greetings

Good morning! I would like to begin by reiterating the kind words of welcome that have been extended to all of you this morning. I am especially pleased to see so many persons from the investor community and private sector present with us today. It is also good that many persons are here from the sister Islands.

I would also like to commend the staff of the Planning Department and the Department of Economic Planning and Statistics for all the arrangements they have made to ensure that today's Launch is a success.

I also congratulate the project consultants – KAIRI Consultants of Trinidad and Tobago. KAIRI Consultants have previously worked in the Islands. They are the authors of the Poverty Assessment Report of 1999, which is widely cited as a seminal work on economic development in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Historical Event

We are about to embark on a National Development planning process which will be unparalleled for the level of consultations and wide spread 'participation' across the length and breadth of our archipelago. For the first time the Turks and Caicos Island

Government will be sponsoring and funding the preparation of a National Development Plan. Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, today is indeed a historic day for these Turks and Caicos Islands.

Today's launch of the Ten Year National Development Plan for the Turks and Caicos Islands is long over due! The last Development Plan having expired some nine years. In the period since the last Plan was prepared, Development Planning has evolved. It has moved away from the old Soviet-type state controlled plans. It has become more integrated and people focused and more environmentally friendly by embracing the tenants of sustainability. More emphasis is now also placed on implementation of Development Plans through 'medium term strategic frameworks' that are closely aligned with National Budgets.

I am pleased to have been informed that the Ten Year National Development Plan for the Turks and Caicos Islands will reflect the latest advances in Development Planning and will also be informed by the recent experiences of a number of countries in the Caribbean and further a-field.

Development Context

The launch of the new Ten Year National Development Plans offers us an opportunity to reflect on developments in these Turks and Caicos Islands and the progress we have made as a people. It also offers an opportunity to make the necessary adjustments to put our country on course to achieve a bright and prosperous future for this and future generations of residents of these Islands. In short the plan is all about the legacy and type of Turks and Caicos Islands that we will leave behind for our children and grandchildren.

The modern economic development of the Turks and Caicos Islands can be traced back to the Provident Limited Development Agreement of the 1960s. Starting from that 'Agreement' continuing through the Club Med Project and associated infrastructure projects, through several oil shocks and periods of global expansion and recessions the

Islands have withstood the test of time. The last few decades saw the decline of the salt industry and the ascendance of the service sector. It also saw the decline in the fortunes of several of our islands, especially Grand Turk, and the ascendance of Providenciales as the centre of economic activity in the country. Along the way, we have embraced Ministerial Government, graduated from Grant-in Aid and witnessed constitutional advancement.

Successive Governments of the Islands have sought to improve the standard of living of the population by continuing investor friendly development policies. These policies have been complemented by supportive governmental financial and economic policies.

Governments have also invested increasing amounts in the health, education and welfare sectors to equip our people with the tools necessary to earn a better standard of living. There have been substantial improvements in all important socio-economic indicators. Real per capita income has increased; life expectancy, educational enrollment and access to utilities have all risen. Instances of malnutrition and infant mortality are rare. Indeed, we have made remarkable progress!

Continuing the period of expansion, which begun in the late 1990s, the Islands are currently experiencing unprecedented economic growth and development.

Recent development experience in the Islands has resulted in several unintended consequences, which are well documented. These include:

- Increased internal migration.
- Increased immigration to the Islands.
- Increasing pressure on the natural and built environment.
- Increased alienation of lands.
- Pressure on social and economic infrastructure.
- Concerns about the role Belongers will play in the Development Process.

Since my Administration assumed the mantle of leadership in these Islands, a little over two years ago, we have sought to address these and other issues critical to our development as a nation and a people and we have much progress to report.

- We have published and are in the process of implementing the agreed recommendations of the bi-partisan Blue Ribbon Commission Report on Immigration.
- We have undertaken a review of Crown Land Policy, which is now being circulated for the input of the public.
- We have embarked on the process of promoting ‘anchor tourism development projects’ on each Island with considerable success. A strategic plan for the Tourist Board is currently being prepared with input of all stakeholders.
- We are in the process of providing essential economic and social infrastructure to improve prospects in all of the Islands, especially the lesser Developed Islands.
- We are in the process of finalizing plans for the construction of national hospitals on Grand Turk and Providenciales starting in 2006.
- And a number of sector plans and policies have been formulated to guide development in several areas including; AIDS, Drugs, Tourism, Policing, Disaster Management, Youth and Sport.

Ten Year Development Plan

Notwithstanding current initiatives by my Administration, we have consistently promoted the need for a National Development Plan for the Turks and Caicos Islands. There has been justifiable criticism that there is the need for all-embracing document that links all of the various sector plans and policies into a consistent document that is linked to a

resources and implementation framework. This is why in my first address to the Legislature as Chief Minister on September 24, 2003, I outlined my Administration's commitment to the preparation of a National Development Plans for the Turks and Caicos Islands. I stated:

“The Ten-year Economic Development Plan will become the cornerstone for consolidating development in all the Islands as it relates to transport, education, land development, procurement of goods, provision of services and growth models. The plan will be futuristic, consultative, and flexible and linked to the capacity of the local population, mindful of limitations imposed by population size, resources and infrastructure development. The plan will also encompass a long term development vision for the Islands! Specific Island development plans will be required for all of the Islands. These will be developed in consultation with our people.”

I have previously outlined some of the changes which have taken place in areas of development planning which should form part of the new Ten Year National Development Plan for the Islands. The planning process will allow the men and women, boys and girls, and all residents across the length and breadth of this Country an opportunity to have their say concerning their development vision for the Islands and the type of country we want to bequeath to our children. Therefore my views as Chief Minister are no more important than the average citizen in shaping the Plan for the Islands future. However, I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate some of the elements and principles I outlined in our Policy Agenda for 2003 to 2007, which I hope will be enshrined in the Plan:

- 1. We must initiate measures that contribute to the infusion of a dignified and confident nation that is at peace with itself and the world – a nation whose people believe in themselves and who in their entrepreneurial, professional and other daily pursuits are energized by dignity and national pride;*

2. *We must strive to become a knowledge-driven economy with information technology serving households, schools, businesses and the government to improve productivity and our overall wellbeing;*
3. *We must promote the applications of law and order and elimination of corruption as key ingredients of our business, professional and political affairs;*
4. *We must work towards higher standards and innovation to become a first class tourism and investment destination;*
5. *We must put an end to ad hoc development and unsystematic and frantic disposal of our prime resource – land. Rather, we will develop a proactive approach to investment that will help us to market new areas;*
6. *We must discourage fronting by promoting genuine partnership between Turks and Caicos Islanders and foreign investors. This will be assisted by expanded credit provision from TCInvest and also by the introduction of new financial instruments such as mutual funds;*
7. *We must ensure that all major development projects are subject to proper Environmental Impact Assessment, which will be carried out with input of all stakeholders;*
8. *Adequate infrastructure is important if we are to continue to attract high calibre investors. Consistent with this requirement, we will seek to establish an Infrastructure Development Fund.*

Conclusions

The Turks and Caicos Islands will forge its place amongst the nations of this World in an increasingly competitive global era. Advances in Information and Communications

Technologies will allow countries to overcome the limitations imposed by small size. What will matter are the Vision, Goals and Strategies we as a people set to guide the course of our future.

The formulation of the Ten Year National Development Plan is consistent with the need for us to collectively set a Vision, Goals and Strategies for the Islands for the foreseeable future. It is therefore important that all persons avail themselves of the chance to inform themselves and participate in the planning process.

As will be elaborated during today's Launch, a Steering Committee, Sector Committees and Islands Committee will be established as part of the planning process. Participation in the various committees will give the citizens of this country ample opportunity to make their input into the development plan. As I have already indicated we have already engaged KAIRI Consults to provide technical assistance during the preparation of the plan. However, I am pleased to inform you that the Consultants will be writing the Development Plan based on the recommendations and ideas put forward by the Committees drawn from our people. So it will be our plan – the Peoples' Plan.

The Government is very committed to the Development Planning process and would be monitoring its progress during the implementation phase. I know there will difficulties and challenges along the way as we seek to ensure that all of the People have an opportunity to participate. We wish the lead Departments, the Committees and the Consultants success as they undertake this initiative. The Government remains committed to working along with the lead Departments and Consultant to resolve any issues that require our attention. Personally, I look forward to meeting with the project Consultants, to being kept informed of the progress of the planning process and to interacting with the various Committees - as together we chart a New course for these Islands for the benefit of our Children.

