



# Media Release

## INCREASED CONSUMER RIGHTS WITH THE NEW NATIONAL CONSUMER POLICY

**16 March, 2018:-** Consumers now have enhanced consumer empowerment and protection with the introduction of the new Consumer Policy for Trinidad and Tobago. Speaking at the launch for the National Consumer Policy of Trinidad and Tobago on Friday 16 March, 2018, Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry said ***“The new Policy enables confident participation of consumers and suppliers in the market place while also taking into account the country’s regional and international commitments”***. She added that while the existing consumer protection legislation provides some protection to consumers, there are deficiencies in addressing several important emerging issues, such as protection for services and digital content transactions. As such, it is proposed that the existing Consumer Protection and Safety Act, Chapter 82:34 of the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago be repealed and replaced in themain (not exclusively), with the provisions of the approved CARICOM Model Consumer Protection Legislation in the form of a New Consumer Protection and Empowerment Act.

The new legislation which supports the new policy’s implementation, places greater emphasis on consumer empowerment through additional Rights and Guarantees for consumers of goods, services and digital content. Another major aspect of the proposed legislation is the establishment of a quasi-judicial Tribunal which will provide consumers with quick, inexpensive and binding means of settling consumer disputes up to a maximum of three hundred thousand dollars (TT \$300,000) in a time-bound manner.

The Trade and Industry Minister noted that, ***“as it relates to penalties, the new Consumer Protection and Empowerment Act will expand beyond the current enforcement responses of authorized officers allowing more stringent provisions against offences such as misleading, false and malicious advertisements, and unfair and unjust transactions, among others.”*** The legislation also facilitates greater enforcement, monitoring and investigative powers for both the Minister and the Director responsible for Consumer Affairs.

Mr. Dexter Morgan Director Consumer Guidance and Protection anticipated that the new Consumer Policy and Legislation would increase the percentage of consumer complaints successfully resolved by the Consumer Affairs Division which currently stands at seventy five percent. Mr. Randall Karim, Director Policy and Strategy at the Ministry of Trade and Industry indicated that the proposed legislation also deals with distance buying which is a major activity in the current consumer landscape.

The Policy is a proactive Government response to consumer concerns and addresses gaps pertaining to the legislative and institutional framework, administrative issues, enforcement issues for industry codes of practice related to services and product safety. Its launch follows World Consumer Rights Day commemorations on March 15 which advocated for greater consumer rights within the digital domain. The Ministry of Trade and Industry is currently implementing a national e-commerce strategy to impact on the digital trading landscape.

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