



Media release

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October 14, 2013

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

The Trinidad and Tobago Debates Commission (TTDC) has decided that there will be no Leaders' Debate on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> October. It is unfortunate that Mrs Kamla Persad-Bissessar has chosen to delegate her responsibility to take part in the Leaders' Debate as the Leader of the People's Partnership.

Mrs Kamla Persad-Bissessar did email the TTDC identifying Mr Prakash Ramadhar as the representative for the People's Partnership. The TTDC responded to Mrs Persad-Bissessar's October 8<sup>th</sup> email correspondence, via email, stating that "this second debate is a LEADERS' debate, i.e. only the LEADER of the People's Partnership qualifies to debate. No substitutes are permitted, as we have to ensure that we treat all parties equally and abide by the same rules." No decision was forthcoming from Mrs Kamla Persad-Bissessar thereafter, until the public release on October 13<sup>th</sup> by the Office of Prime Minister on the subject.

The TTDC wishes to advise that our decision to cancel the Leaders' Debate is in no way influenced by the Chamber or any members of the Business Community. The TTDC made this decision based on our established rules for the Leaders' Debate which were communicated in no uncertain terms to the parties. We must be able to stand by our rules, as we represent the public interest. The public expected that there would have been a debate with the Leaders.

We are, therefore, indeed surprised at this unique interpretation of the rules in spite of the communication mentioned above.

It is a sad day for democracy in Trinidad and Tobago when the efforts to have open and independent debate among the Leaders of the Political Parties/Coalition are thwarted by the action of one group.

We respectfully refer Mrs Kamla Persad-Bissessar to her letter on May 12, 2010 as then Leader of the Opposition UNC to the TTDC, from which we quote: “Hopefully in the future whenever... a leader ...puts the nation’s interest ahead of his or her own, the country will finally have the benefit of a national leadership debate.”

**THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO DEBATES COMMISSION**