



The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited
NGC Sanfest Steelpan Ensemble Finals
November 19, 2016

Good morning. It's truly heartening to be here today to witness the level of talent on display at NGC Sanfest 2016 Pan Ensemble Competition. We certainly commend the participants for their hard work and dedication in preparing for this competition. It is reassuring to know that the future of our national instrument is in such good hands. I do hope you enjoy today's presentations.

Competitions such as this, play a key role in preserving one aspect of our national heritage - the Steelpan. They provide opportunities for students who have learnt the national instrument to practise their craft alongside their peers and to be exposed to songs by many of our calypso icons through the selection of competition pieces. The constructive feedback which is given by the judges at the end of the performances help to actively guide and foster the development of you, the young musician. This helps to nurture musical talents and supports your growth as musicians.

At NGC, we too are passionate about the national instrument. For more than two decades, we have assisted unsponsored steel bands across the country and, in recent years, we have become the title sponsor of three steelbands; NGC La Brea Nightingales, NGC Couva Joylanders and NGC Steel Xplosion from Tobago. We have also provided support to Gonzales Sheikers, a single pan band in Belmont which comprises mostly children. Our support is more than just financial; our Facilities Development Programme, in partnership with these bands provides the needed infrastructure to support centres of music, and economic and social development, not just for the pan side itself, but for young people who are community minded and interested in the steelpan.

The pan theatres, as they are known, allow the players to develop music literacy and for the bands to have the opportunity to generate much needed revenue for their day to day activities outside of the carnival season. The bands' leadership are also beneficiaries of training in the business management skills necessary to create a self-sustaining steelband. We do all of this because we see the steelpan as more than just music to accompany carnival. It is a part of our national heritage and should be promoted with the goal of ensuring its future. We share this vision with the San Fernando Arts Council and the Festival Team and we wish to commend them, their members and, of course, all of the volunteers who make this vision possible through the NGC Sanfest now in its 46th year. Finally, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the principals, teachers, parents and, most importantly, you the students who have come out to take part in all the other aspects of the NGC Sanfest festival each year and, of course, the Pan Ensemble Competition which continues to grow and to excite the school population and nationals alike.

I thank you.