

THE NATIONAL GAS COMPANY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO LIMITED

Remarks for the Launch of NGC Bocas Lit Fest 2017 March 22, 2017

Good morning.

It's hard to believe we are already three months deep into 2017 and that it's Bocas time again, but here we are, ready to launch yet another edition of the festival. For us at NGC, it's always been a thrill to partner with Bocas, now even more so as the event keeps evolving and expanding. As title sponsors, we have the exclusive honour of traveling in name with the NGC Bocas Lit Fest, and thanks to the footprint of this festival, we are well on our way to becoming a globally recognised brand. We cannot wait to see where Bocas takes us next.

While festival attendance has always been healthy, we are particularly optimistic that this year's offerings will see a bumper turnout, for several reasons.

Firstly, we have all heard with great pride that the NGC Bocas Lit Fest was named among the world's top twenty literary festivals by Penguin Random House - The Writers' Academy. Bibliophiles worldwide were encouraged to visit 'exotic' Port-of-Spain to take in readings, performances, films, workshops, discussions and children's storytelling in the 'vibrant atmosphere' of this 'rapidly expanding' literary festival. This recommendation from one of the world's top publishing houses is sure to entice more literary enthusiasts to make the trek in April to sample some Bocas fare. NGC wishes to publicly congratulate Marina and the entire Bocas team on adding yet another commendation to the trophy case. To grow this festival in six years from an idea into a globally acclaimed, best-in-class event is nothing short of remarkable, and it speaks volumes about your passion and industry.

On the heels of this accolade comes another, albeit more sobering spotlight on Caribbean literature that is just as sure to boost festival traffic as The Writers' Academy endorsement. The Caribbean region and the global literary fraternity are mourning the loss of iconic writer and Nobel Laureate, Sir Derek Walcott. He was a giant among poets and playwrights, who produced some of the most stunning works interrogating Caribbean selfhood and postcolonial identity. The revival and circulation of those works in memoriam will no doubt pique interest in his craft and whet the appetite for Caribbean literature as a whole. As the purveyor of that product to the world, Bocas is sure to attract crowds seeking to discover Walcott and his kindred literary voices.

Of course, Bocas does more than just promote writers and books. Literacy goes beyond the simple ability to read and write to encompass a degree of knowledgeability and learning. In the spirit of promoting literacy in its fullest measure, the NGC Bocas Lit Fest makes space in its agenda for intellectual discussion and open debate. This edition of the festival will take on the extremely topical issue of human rights. Violence against women, against children, human trafficking, and general aggression upon our freedom to move and do as we please: these are all top-of-mind concerns for Trinbagonians, and Bocas promises to build on the national conversation around them through insightful panel discussions. With the public clamouring for solutions and more forums to air their concerns, we expect a healthy turnout at these sessions.

So, with a number of different draws for festival-goers this year, we at NGC are looking forward to heavier festival traffic and bigger impact in 2017. In that regard, we wish the Bocas team best of luck as they prepare for the weeks ahead, with complete confidence that they are primed for and equal to the task. As always, we

are happy to stand with Bocas as a corporate partner, title sponsor, and ally in the cause of promoting literacy and developing our creative industries.

Friends, I thank you.