

**Launch of NGC Right On Track partnership with the NAAA and NBFTT**

**Radisson Hotel Trinidad**

**Wrightson Road**

**Port of Spain**

**Tuesday November 3, 2015**

*The Honourable, Darryl Smith, Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs*

*Mr. Hasely Crawford, Olympic Gold Medallist and Trinity Cross Recipient*

*Mr. Ephraim Serrette, President, National Association of Athletics Administrations of Trinidad and Tobago*

*Mr. Garvin Warwick, President, National Basketball Federation of Trinidad and Tobago*

*Ms Wynda Chandler, Head Community Relations, The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited*

*Mr. Fofi Gorge, Community Relations Officer, The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited*

*Members of NGC, NAAA and NBFTT*

*Coaches of the NGC Right on Track Programme*

*Media*

*Specially Invited Guests*

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

Good morning.

On July 24<sup>th</sup> 1976, a young man from San Fernando carried the hope of a nation on winged feet past the finish line in Montreal, Canada to claim gold for his country at the Olympic Games. Our small twin-island state was uplifted by the unprecedented honour, its people were seized with burning patriotism, and a generation was impassioned to follow suit.

Mr. Hasely Crawford, seated unassumingly among us this morning, did more than just outrun his competitors that day. Through the countless accolades that followed on the heels of his achievement, he proved to Trinidad and Tobago that Sport held a wellspring of potential for national development and recognition, that it was a viable and rewarding career option and it deserved greater investment. These, ladies and gentlemen, were fundamental reasons behind the conceptualization and implementation of NGC Right On Track development programme in 1999, spearheaded by none other than the man himself- Mr. Hasely Crawford- then Head of Community Relations at NGC.

The Right On Track development programme, which initially centred on athletics, today teaches skills in both track and field and basketball to children at the Primary and Secondary School levels via its ambulant Coaching Caravan. The science-based programme is a practical illustration of how mass participation in

physical activity can be achieved through engagement in track and field and basketball, and how the fundamental motor skills taught during the Caravan's well-structured sessions enable participants to make the best use of their talent and reach their fullest potential.

Through this initiative, NGC provides practical instruction to young persons from schools and communities across the Trinidad and Tobago, as well as critical training for coaches to promote sustainability and build capacity in these sporting disciplines. On the surface, the outcomes of the program include heightened interest and success in these sports at both the individual and national levels, and encouragement of exercise and improved health among participating youths. However, an arguably more important result of participation is the integration of cardinal sporting values like teamwork, fair play, dedication, respect and discipline into life beyond the field of play. For a society writhing in the grip of criminality and intemperance, these virtues are of great importance to our rehabilitation.

Since its inception in 1999, the Right On Track development programme has benefitted more than 15,000 participants in 105 communities and 8 institutions; it has trained 88 coaches and it has formed and/or restored 7 sport clubs. Its impact

is attested by the many coaches who have seen results in the form of improved athletic ability, pride in achievement and character development. To give a sense of the success of this programme, some of its accomplished alumni include:

- Sherman Alsop, winner of an athletic scholarship from Louisiana State University currently training in the USA with an eye on Rio 2016;
- Breanna Gomes, a top junior female sprinter;
- Randy Persad, a former high jumper who is now a swimming coach at UTT;
- Krystal Gibb, an Under 13 Javelin national champion;
- Linfah Jones, goal keeper for the national women's football team at the FIFA Under-17 World Cup 2010;
- Christian Benjamin, sprinter and hurdler who represented the country at junior national and regional meets;
- And Professor Themesa Neckles, former Right on Track senior coach currently heading the Physical Education Department with responsibility for the Caribbean at Sheffield University, England.

We at NGC are extremely proud of this Programme and its legacy. We firmly believe that it is making a positive difference in our society by providing a productive pursuit for our nation's youth and introducing Sport as an avenue for gainful employment.

Driven by the success of the Programme thus far, NGC has decided to extend the project into a new and exciting phase. For many years, NGC has partnered with the National Association of Athletics Administrations (NAAA) and the National Basketball Federation of Trinidad and Tobago (NBFTT). Our close association with these organizations is no surprise given that they are the local bodies governing the disciplines of our Right On Track Programme.

Our collaboration over the years has however extended well beyond our in-house Programme. NGC commits substantial investment to the NAAA in support of its Championship Games as well as athletic training, and we have been pleased to see our investment yield rich dividends. Our national athletes continue the charge in the footsteps of our Olympians, this year registering the highest medal count for Trinidad and Tobago at the prestigious PanAm Games. On the basketball court, our contributions to the NBFTT have helped produce players who have,

over the years, been recognized by and earned scholarships from international schools.

The success of these organizations at developing their respective sports has been an impetus for NGC to deepen our relationships, so as to grow the reach of the Right On Track Programme. Today, I am pleased to announce that NGC will be extending the parameters of its partnership with these organizations through collaboration on the NAAA's Kids Athletic Programme and the NBFTT's Mini to Masters Programme. Both these initiatives embody the spirit and capture the intent of Right On Track and we are excited about the possibilities they present.

I am sure the speakers to come will share more on the schematics of these initiatives so I shall leave it to them to elaborate. I will however say, by way of closing, that we at NGC have much faith in this new collaborative undertaking. Just as Keshorn Walcott went from spearing mangoes in his backyard in Toco to hurling a javelin into first place at the Olympic Games, we are confident that the collective investment of NGC, the NAAA and the NBFTT in the future of Sport will see countless young athletes aspire to and achieve glory for the red, white and black.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you.

