

Remarks re Launch of NAAA Championships

I am pleased to be here today at the launch of the 2012 NAAA Open Championships scheduled for the 23rd and 24th June at the Hasely Crawford stadium. The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago is a Gold Sponsor of this prestigious event which has become a major sporting activity not only in this country but in the wider Caribbean and beyond. In 2012 the Championships will have additional interest since it takes place in an Olympic year.

The Olympic Games in London begin on July 27th, less than two months away and our athletes are now in their final stages of preparation. We can therefore expect to witness a very competitive series of events and I will not be surprised if some national records fall by the wayside. It should be a treat for sports fans all across the country and we look forward to a large crowd in attendance on both days. I am also aware that the international governing body the IAAF has approved the relays as qualifiers for the London Olympics and this should attract participants beyond our shores. The stage is therefore set for an exciting and competitive two days of athletic excellence.

NGC is pleased to be associated with the NAAA Open Championships because we see sport as an important vehicle for developing the nation. Sport not only brings international prestige when our athletes succeed overseas but is also a valuable tool for youth and community development. For these reasons NGC has invested significant sums in various sporting activities at both the national and the community level. Recently we established a partnership with the Trinidad and Tobago Cricket Board to assist in the development of the game at all levels and in all areas of the country. This partnership involves the sponsorship of the national cricket team including the preparation and participation of the team in the 2012 and 2013 Nokia Champions League. It also includes sponsorship of the TTCB's "grassroots" community-based developmental programme as well as sponsorship of the regional and local Twenty-20 competitions. There is also a component for the development of coaches which we consider to be very important for improving standards of performance.

NGC has also been a proud sponsor of many other sporting disciplines including football, netball and basketball. In basketball we continue to sponsor the annual secondary schools competition and we have plans to expand our support into community-based basketball. This would be in keeping with NGC's Corporate Social Responsibility philosophy which seeks to promote sustainable community development.

Because of this approach NGC has emerged as one of the leaders in the design and implementation of effective CSR programmes in Trinidad and Tobago. In sport, culture and youth development NGC has established a reputation as an exemplary corporate citizen with an unswerving commitment to the citizens of our nation. It is this commitment that has moved us to seek this partnership with the NAAA , the local governing body for track and field. The history of track and field in Trinidad and Tobago is a proud one filled with many examples of outstanding performances both here and abroad. This year ,we at NGC, expect that this trend will continue and the NAAA Open Championships provide an ideal stage for our athletes to demonstrate this.

I therefore wish to urge the sporting public especially the young fans to attend the Championships on both days. I am confident that you will be satisfied with the standard of athletic prowess which will be on display. Best wishes to the NAAA, their hardworking officials and all the participating athletes for an exciting and successful 2012 Open Championships.