

POLITICS OF CHOICE

Advancing the
Unification Process



**Platform for Political Action for a
One-to-One Electoral Contest**

DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

Presentation by the Political Leader
To the National Executives, Policy Caucus, Strategy Team & Constituency Executives of
the Congress of the People
February 22, 2010

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Political Action for a One-to-One Electoral Process

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I.

Political Context

Political Dynamics & Reality

*“Two defining features of democracy are the periodic renewal of the mandates of leaders through free, fair and competitive elections: and a set of basic rights of expression and organization that facilitates **the exercise of political choice and for holding leaders to account.**” (Yusug Bangura, *Democracy and Social Policy*)*

A. Choiceless Democracy

We are still on the journey from a colonial democracy to a choiceless democracy to a genuine independence and a democracy with direct citizen participation. We are still the victims in a ‘**colonial democracy**’ - fighting for our own identity and the right to shape our future, the democratic values of the society and the workings of our political institutions

Competitive elections and holding leaders to account- is this the missing link in our political system? Are our politicians able to behave in the way because of this missing link? Is this missing link the reason why some have described us as a “**choiceless democracy?**”

There are two competing groups in our polity. Votes are not easily transferable which leads to the lack of ‘**electoral competitiveness**’ in our political system. Citizens have one instrument to influence the thousand of decisions that Governments make on their behalf - **the vote**. Our national challenge is to improve the effectiveness of the vote - otherwise we will only have to settle for a ‘**choiceless democracy**’ where office holders are not held accountable.

The pivot for making our electoral system more competitive is through the creation of a ‘**new media**’. **Political leaders and media power persons enjoy enormous power - including the power to withhold information from the public and to distort information.** This is the biggest obstacle we face, and this obstacle becomes even more pronounced when leadership in a country at all levels- church, business, labour, civil society and intellectual- become hostile to changing the structure of power that keep us where we are in a choice less democracy. Such a leadership operates on the principle of enlightened self-interest, not in the interest of the public good. **Liberation through education is the best platform to challenge the workings of a failed political system.**

B. The Promise of a National Movement

In 2010, there is an objective and burning need for the development of a new national movement in the face of all our institutions having fallen apart and the fracturing of our society. **The challenge to fix politics is to engage in the process of political change and seize the emerging opportunities.** *The Congress of the People* has a history of building the unity process, and this will not be the unity of the political leaders, but the unity of the people the across ethnic, social or political corridors. *The Congress of the People* aims to build a synthesis of the peoples of T&T in the process of winning the next election. We want to build machinery not for elections, but for building the social, economic and political fabric of this country.

In the face of this promise there is need for a movement to stop the drive in that dangerous direction and for the expansion of the role of citizens in governance and decision-making, for the resolution of problems left by history in the nation-building project: *The Tobago-Trinidad relationship; Establishing the identity of a Trinbagonian personality and culture using what is best from its main pillars of the children of slavery and indenture; Deepening of the governance process to reflect community rights; Other unresolved issues.*

Presently the COP Movement for the deepening of democracy is seeking a renewal of society in the face of its rapid degeneration and chronic all-round crisis including the crisis of legitimacy of the existing governance structures. We ask all citizens to participate in this movement and contribute to it, not based on narrow aims as happened when the PNM took leadership of the independence movement in the 1950's. It is to participate for fulfilling the goals of the COP Movement: ***Inclusive Development, Harmonious Society, Democratic Government, Shared Values.***

There have been several such progressive national movements in the past. They have developed from the desire of the people to fulfil the requirements of the time. However, not all have been led by those who wished to actually meet those requirements in the interest of those who should have been their beneficiaries.

- The drive for legalized representation of the labouring people's interest as seen in ***the dockworkers' strike of 1919*** and continuing up to the ***anti-colonial uprising of 1937***.
- The drive for people's participation in the developing governance structures represented in the ***1937 anti-colonial uprising*** in the demand for home rule, in the 1942 success in the demand for universal adult suffrage.
- ***The independence movement*** – from the period of the 1930's up to the period led by the PNM from the 1950's to formal independence in 1962.
- The movement for real benefit of the fruits of independence for the ordinary man and for sovereignty of the nation – ***the Black Power Movement of 1970*** led by the youth only 8 years after independence.
- ***The movement for workers' participation*** in governance in the economic and political spheres from the post-Black Power period in 1970 to 1975 culminating in the oil and sugar strike and the creation of the United Labour Front.



C. Fragmentation Politics

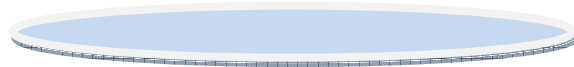
Today as we look around at the political landscape, it is evident that the old guard is crumbling. We have arrived at an ***historical moment*** in which the opportunity arises to lay a new foundation for the transformation of our beloved Country. A foundation established on the footing of good governance and shared values so as to create a harmonious society in which all persons will have an opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Despite the promise of our Independence in 1962, we have failed as a Country to forge a Nation united by a single vision in pursuit of our goal to create a secure and vibrant participatory democracy. Instead, our politicians have institutionalized colonialism and we have allowed our politicians to create a dependency

syndrome as a tool of patronage and mobilization and to create divisions among the different races in our plural society. This sense of division has been exacerbated by the manner in which our politicians have implemented our *winner-take-all system* in which large sections of our communities, not aligned to the ruling party, are disempowered and relegated to second-class status. This is the challenge we now face in the Movement towards fixing the fragmented politics of our times.

In addition, we face the threat of **neo-colonialism** posed by big money that seeks to influence the development of our Country to achieve their own narrow self-interests through financial manipulation of our political parties. At this juncture our People need a government whom they can trust, a Government which will look out for all and particularly the poor and the marginalized and not simply be at the service of party financiers.

To meet this challenge we need to align ourselves to a political platform in which those who offer themselves up to the Electorate do so based on a desire to serve, putting God and Country before allegiance to personalities and Party. If we are to successfully meet this challenge, it is essential that we embrace the Politics of Principle and establish a Framework for Good Governance to which all Parties aspiring to form the Next Government will subscribe.



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Party Philosophy

Uniting the National Direction

A. Politics of Value

The politics of value advocated by the Congress of the People focuses on Nationhood, Good Governance, Security and Direct People Participation.

The COP believes that if we are to chart a new course for our Country that all of our actions must be founded on the key values of Truth, Justice and Freedom without which any political party would fragment into incoherent political factions. You have only to look around and see what is happening in our politics to know that without such guiding principles the power hungry politics of personality and ‘dog eat dog’ threaten to cause disintegration and dissension among the leaders.

The Congress of the People believes that it is vital for any unified political vehicle to emerge there must be consensus on the principles and codes of political and electoral conduct by which the parties will be guided. We have therefore drafted and already circulated to other political parties for their input and comment “**The People’s Charter: Principles and Codes of Political Conduct**”. Such a Charter will be the bedrock on which a sustainable and lifelong union can be formed so as to act as the vehicle for the transformation of our Country.

If we are to achieve a true sense of **Nationhood**, it is essential that we forge a common vision for our Country identifying the areas of national life which will be given pride of place so as to ensure the quality of life of each individual is improved and in particular the lives of the poor, the disabled and the marginalized. Regrettably our current political system is all about divide and rule in the quest to gain

political power. It is the disharmony, the suspicion and the greed which such a system breeds which today epitomizes life in Trinidad and Tobago.

We cannot afford in a small country such as ours to leave any person behind. Everyone brings to the table their own unique strengths, together will allow us to prosper in harmony and peace. **United** together as one family we must break this political paradigm so that we can create a united Nation in which all our people are cherished and can benefit from a shared prosperity.

We will not achieve this Nationhood to which we aspire however unless we put in place and uphold systems of good governance in which we hold ourselves accountable for achieving our goals and we do so in a transparent and fair manner at all times seeking the common good of our Country. It will our job as the Next Government to transform our Country from its present state of lawlessness and apathy to one in which peace and justice prevails and all citizens can go about their business without the sense of insecurity which now seeks to engulf every facet of our lives. To achieve this we need a Government that can plan ahead and not simply react on an ad hoc basis to crisis with knee jerk reactions. We need a Government that sees the needs of the People as the first priority and not simply construction of tall buildings merely for their own sense of aggrandizement.

It is in this context that the COP proposes to create a platform for governance which raises the politics to a higher level – Recognizing that no maximum leader or party can ever have all the answers and the consequent need to listen and benefit from the creative spirit, energy and ingenuity of the widest cross-section of our People. In this way we will build a Nation which embraces the wonder, beauty and imagination of the multi-cultural elements of, and diversity of races and religions in, our rainbow country.

B. Values Guiding Political Action

Uniting the National Direction

The values guiding the political actions of the COP Movement are compressed into the three powerful ideas of **Truth, Justice and Freedom**. They are the core organizing principles without them the COP Movement would fall apart, would fragment into incoherent political factions. They are the ‘glue’ that holds the natural differences together and binds us into a national political movement with a common good, purpose and direction. They are essential guides to our political actions, they keep us on the ‘right path’, assure of being on course. They provide with the standards to judge by, live by and act on.

- **Truth must be a core value of the COP Movement and its political action.**

Just as we expect our government to be truthful to us as citizen when ‘it speaks’, plans and acts on our behave; so must be the COP Movement and its members be held **accountable for its actions**. Just as we expect elected leaders to act with integrity when exercising the legitimate power citizens have entrusted in them, the COP Movement must always be concerned with earning and keeping **the trust of the people**.

The caring citizen relies, depends and expects the COP Movement to work for the **common good of all**. The political action of the COP Movement must always be guided by **responsible and transparent behavior** and genuine caring for the welfare of all the citizens and particularly the less advantaged of our country. *One nation, one people, one government and one future must be enshrined as the guiding truth of the COP Movement.*

Freedom and Justice are ideas the COP Movement must live by and act on. COP Movement must live by and act on the ideas of freedom and justice in order to *achieve a free and just society*. The political actions must always be in defense of **political freedom** and the embedded constitutionally rights associated with, especially guarding the right of free speech. The primary responsibility of the state is to provide safety for its citizens. On the national level the COP Movement must be guided by the right of self-determination, independence and sovereignty. **COP Movement must be the Defender of Justice**. It must in all political actions be *practicing fairness, impartiality and even-handedness*. **Equality and Social Justice** must be at the core of practicing parity, fairness, equal opportunity and the avoidance of any form of discrimination and inequity.

C. People's Charter

Declarations of Principles

The Government

We believe a Government should

1. **Partner with the People** in establishing the conditions in which everyone can fulfill his/her true potential so that our Country can flourish on the basis of sustainable development – everyone counts and everyone is needed
2. **Provide a safe, secure and sustainable environment** where all People can live, work and play without fear and in which their quality of life is optimized – Crime must not be tolerated and measures must be taken to end the lawlessness and disorder which contribute to the atmosphere in which criminal activity thrives
3. **Ensure that the disadvantaged in our Society** are provided with the tools to enable them to become productive and make reasonable provisions for those persons who by reason of illness, old age or disability cannot work
4. **Provide the framework for education and training** which is relevant to the needs of the modern world, with particular emphasis on the need to become a knowledge based economy and to introduce a platform for young people to engage in entrepreneurial activity
5. **Build a diverse and democratic society** that respects human rights, in which all people live in dignity and security, free of all forms of discrimination on the basis of religion, color or gender
6. **Not tolerate any form of corruption** and should not politicize the civil service, commissions or state enterprises
7. **Promote legislation for the registration of political parties** and their funding subject to review of an independent body, to be established based on the guidelines promoted by the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), which reports annually to a Joint Select Committee of Parliament
8. **Support a system of governance** under which all major sectors of the population are represented and encourages the participation of women at all levels of governance
9. **Invite international observers to oversee every General Election** in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers whose report is promptly laid in Parliament.

Members of Government

We believe that responsible members of Government should uphold the following principles of personal conduct:

1. **Selflessness**
Holders of public office should make decisions based solely in terms of the public interest. Members should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
2. **Integrity**
Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
3. **Objectivity**
In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices based on merit.
4. **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

6. Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example

III

Mandate for Political Dialogue In Search for Political Solutions

A. Social Contract with People

The COP believes that the political vehicle which will undertake the role of the **Next Government** must enter into a new **social contract** with the People of Trinidad and Tobago. A contract under which the **Next Government** will covenant with the People to govern in a manner which is fair and transparent and which will hold itself accountable for delivering a better quality of life for all. The **Next Government** must undertake the transformation of our Country, encouraging the diversification of our economy and creating an entrepreneurial knowledge driven service oriented economy in which meaningful jobs will be created so that we achieve sustainable development for the long term.

In order to establish the political vehicle which will form the **Next Government** based on the mandate of the People, it is vital that we commence the dialogue towards achieving this objective now. We must ensure that whatever vehicle is created to win the **electoral battle** it must be established on a solid foundation where the interests of each sector have a voice. This dialogue will require deep listening in an atmosphere of respect in which we search for solutions that will embrace the concerns of all and produce a just and fair outcome. It will mean that sometimes we will have to compromise our positions but never our principles. This is the reason why our position is that any such dialogue must first seek to establish the common principles and ethical behaviour to which we can all subscribe.

B. Protocol for Politics and Governance

The *Congress of the People*, in collaboration with all parties who are prepared to support a similar vision, proposes that we work towards establishing a **Protocol for Politics and Governance** that will set out the principles of governance to which all Parties will adhere when they form the Next Government. Such a Protocol will build on the work done by the Circles of Hope and create institutions and mechanisms which will enable the Next Government to listen and take into account the Voice of the People. The Protocol will promote open and transparent government and hold the Next Government accountable for achieving the goals that are established in collaboration with the People.

The COP envisages that this Protocol will represent the Platform for Governance for the engagement of our Society by establishing three channels through which the views and opinions of the People can be taken into account:

1. Direct Citizen Participation. The Next Government will create an internet portal “E-view”, which will be accessible to all so that the People have a voice in governance. Every individual and group will be able to express views, opinions and ideas on the development of our Communities and the Country as a whole through this internet portal.

2. Civil Society Board. Civil society organizations will be invited to register in a Civil Society Register and to appoint two voting delegates to vote on behalf of each of their organizations to establish a Civil Society Board. The Civil Society Board will establish Stakeholder Advisory Councils from among Board Members and such experts in their respective fields as the Board Members consider are representative of various Civil Society Sectors. Through these mechanisms Civil Society Organizations will have an avenue to have their concerns addressed by the Next Government.

3. Community Government. The Next Government will promote a system of community government which empowers communities by giving them a voice in defining community problems and solutions directly and via the internet portal for consideration by the local government bodies.

We propose that the Protocol will establish a number of mechanisms and institutions to ensure good governance by the Next Government which will include:

4. The Financial and Fiscal Commission. The Next Government will establish a Financial and Fiscal Commission which will be served by persons with expertise in finance, business and economics. The role of the Commission is to make recommendations to Cabinet with respect to:

- *Revenue raising measures;*
- *Prioritization and optimization of expenditure;*
- *Reengineering the pension system;*
- *Establishing a Disaster Fund and a Health Fund;*
- *Sharing and allocation of national revenue among Central Government, State Agencies, the Tobago House of Assembly and Community Government Assemblies.*

The broad allocation factors which the Financial and Fiscal Commission are required to take into account in making its recommendations will be set out in the Protocol.

5. Cabinet and Parliamentary Matters. In order to conduct the affairs of the Next Government in an effective, transparent and accountable manner:

- Each Government Ministry will be required to develop a strategic plan for the Ministry, including State Enterprises within the Ministry’s portfolio, for submission by the relevant Minister for approval of Cabinet. The plan will incorporate performance goals, achievement milestone dates, benchmarks, feasibility studies relative to proposed capital expenditure projects and a draft budget for the Ministry
- Each Minister will have to report to Cabinet and Parliament at regular intervals on the performance of the Ministry

The COP proposes that the Protocol will encompass common positions on matters relating to Tobago, Priority Legislation and the Constitution. In relation to:

6. Tobago. The COP believes that the governance arrangements should allow for Tobago to exercise autonomy over its internal affairs through the Tobago House of Assembly, subject only to transparency and accountability. The Tobago House of Assembly will be required to prepare an annual strategic operational plan and budget, including feasibility studies relative to proposed capital expenditure projects, based on which Parliament’s approval will be sought for the Tobago Appropriation. The THA will be entitled, subject to standard operational procedures, to draw down from the Tobago Appropriation. A report at regular intervals must be submitted to the Cabinet and Parliament by the THA as to its performance in the preceding period with respect to the achievement of its goals and objectives in its strategic plan.

7. Priority Legislation. The Next Government will submit to Parliament for its consideration legislation for the implementation of certain identified priority matters, including:

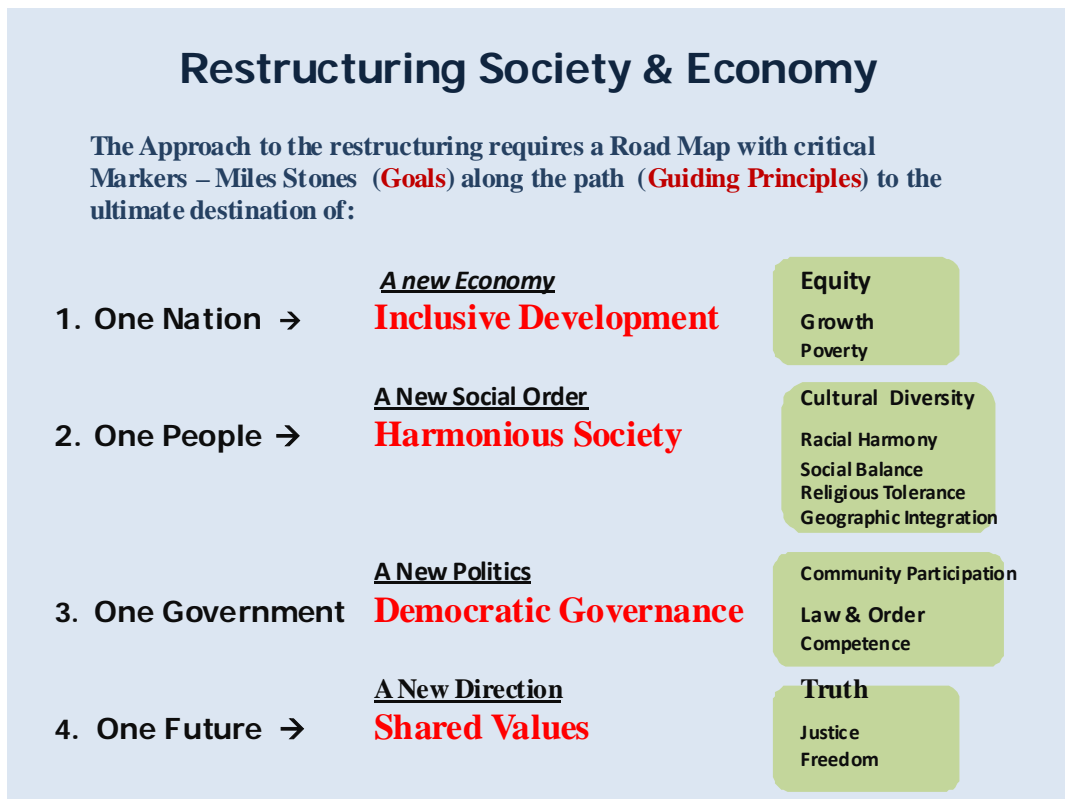
- Effective procurement legislation and regulations which will ensure efficiency, transparency, fairness and accountability;
- Extending the role of the Auditor General to include, performance audits, investigative audits and value audits and empowering the Auditor General to engage external auditors to assist in accomplishing the duties assigned to the Auditor General
- Establishment of a People’s Protector with power to investigate State Sector Agencies and government officials where corruption is suspected and to report on such activities to the DPP for prosecution if considered advisable.

8. The Constitution. The COP believes that the following elements should be incorporated or maintained in the Constitution to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago enjoys improved governance:

- a fixed election date
- an electoral system for election of parliamentary representatives comprising a mixed system of proportional representation and first pass the post
- limiting the person who is chief executive, whether president or prime minister, to serving not more than two terms in office. Such chief executive to be voted for by the entire electorate under a preferential voting system
- in addition to the current human rights and freedoms, outlining the duties and responsibilities of the Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago with the aim of building the national character of its citizens based on sound moral and spiritual values and ethical principles
- appointment of independent senators from among persons nominated by the Civil Society Board
- Independence of the Judiciary: Judges shall be independent in their administrative and adjudicative functions for the proper discharge of their duties

C. Changing the Priorities for Development - An Outline

The Drive to Nationhood Places Societal Development of Trinidad and Tobago on the centre stage and requires a changing of priorities for development of the economy.



A major national challenge for Trinidad and Tobago is to restructure the society and economy from a severely distorted economy, into a Human-centred, Knowledge-driven Service Economy. To achieve this restructuring demands a genuine collaborative and unifying national effort involving all sectors of the society and economy, all communities of interests, all citizens of this country. It demands a National Dialogue, a national discussion on this new Human-centred, Knowledge-driven Service Economy.

IV

The Mechanics of Political Change

Engaging the Political Process of Change

A. Fixing the Politics

Engaging the Process

Movement toward Nationhood

In the Case of T&T, there is a Failed Consensus to build Nationhood. There is a real distinction between Statehood and Victimhood and our future driven concept of Nationhood.

Nationhood trumps the complimentarity of Statehood & Victimhood.

Statehood Politics

Political Party and State Power over Nationhood - **Aborted Nationhood**

Failure to achieve:

Discipline – Production – Tolerance

Victimhood Politics

Leadership loyalty over State and Nationhood – **Permanent Opposition**

Misguided values

Bad Experience, Discrimination, Personal Loyalty

Nationhood Politics

People (Citizen) participation in governance – **National Patriotism**

Shared values

Truth, Justice and Freedom

The Political Challenge

- The challenge is to fix the politics in Trinidad and Tobago
- The politics of change provides the opportunity to fix the politics
- To move forward as a nation, demands freeing ourselves from the imprisonment of the gatekeepers that have kept our modern politics in a state of siege.

Failure of the Current Politics

- We must deal with the demand and supply of good governance in our country. The gap is increasing, it is getting wider yet the expectations of the people for good governance cannot be realized by the current political system.
- Recognize that in the current State of politics, the growth of the criminal industry is intermingled with the politics.
- All our institutions have found that their values, their beliefs and their principles have been subverted by political agendas
- The country is now fragmented on the basis of ethnicity, income disparity or geography.
- Nationhood as the glue that holds the core values of this nation together has dissolved.

Engaging in the Process of Change

To achieve nationhood starts with understanding the workings of the political system

- We have to change the politics to create the change.
- We should recognize that the failure of the old political system is based on the belief the electoral politics can fix the politics,
- Opportunities for changing the politics are emerging. The risk that we face in trying to grasp those opportunities is that we let it end up in a political bubble.

Mechanics of change.

How do we go forward in order to ensure that we grasp this opportunity? Using the current opportunity to change the paradigm of politics and alter the behaviour of the political system in Trinidad and Tobago. It requires both the electoral agenda and government agenda work in tandem.

- **Sometimes, political ideas are way ahead of the political consciousness.**
When the Congress of the People was first established, it attempted to win over the trust of the people— on the issues of democracy, on the issues of unity and on the issues of development. It was different from the politics of the past that merely appealed to ethnic considerations.
- **The platform that the COP created to fix the politics is more valid now than it was four years ago.**
What has happened is that the political consciousness of another twenty five percent of the population has now demonstrated that. So, the most significant thing about the UNC election is that the people's power became paramount and changed the prospect for the future.
- **We must win another twenty five percent of the consciousness of the people** because if we don't, not only will we face an improbable task of the political arithmetic of victory, but we will face a haunting task of not being able to govern properly.
- **An electoral agenda gets you into power, but the political (government) agenda will sustain you in power.**
It is the government agenda that will give credibility for the next rounds. So what we have to do now is to go deeper into building, not only the electoral agenda but the political agenda which will sustain the fixing of the politics, and the government agenda which will ensure that the future will have less possibilities of fracture.



B. The Platform for Nationhood



Agenda for Dialogue and Solutions

Let us now devise an agenda for dialogue.

- To make a serious attempt to alter the paradigm of politics and fix the political system that has failed our generation.
- To facilitate transforming the electoral platform into a political platform and into a government platform.
- To bring together all the different political currents throughout the country and all the different political ideas to establish that there is more in common than there is a division. That is the first step in the process of engineering a solution.
- To create a political situation where the entire country will benefit - not statehood politics, not victimhood politics but nationhood politics.

C. Circles of Hope

Engaging the Political Process of Change

The COP Movement recognizes that none of these lofty goals will be achieved without the unity required to establish a political vehicle which will be triumphant at the polls. We are therefore resolute in our determination to ensure that, together with the other political players, including the *United National*

Congress (UNC), the Tobago Organization of the People (TOP) and the National Joint Action Congress (NJAC) we work towards achieving this objective. Indeed, we have already begun playing a pivotal role in pursuing the dialogue towards unification, through **The People's Charter: Principles and Codes of Political Conduct** and through the personal contacts which we have fostered with our sisters and brothers among these other political players.

Today I am launching a new initiative towards the **unification process** which will ultimately represent one of the cornerstones for the transformation of Trinidad and Tobago. There is a sense among the People that something new and dynamic is happening in the political firmament which is pregnant with new possibilities. Hope for a better tomorrow is emerging.

And so today we give birth to the **"Circles of Hope"** in which we will invite the other political parties to nominate representatives to join one of **6 Circles**, combining the best talents of our land to map out joint proposals on matters touching upon

- **"Security & Justice";**
- **"Quality of Life: Health, Education & Infrastructure";**
- **"Employment, Poverty Reduction & the Economy";**
- **"Competitiveness & Equity";**
- **"Corruption & Integrity";**
- **People Issues – Community, Family, Aging, Youth & Children.**

Each *Circle of Hope* will produce the plans for the transformation of our Country and will form the basis on which as the Next Government, together we will seek the inclusive development of our Country so that everyone can participate in a Shared Prosperity and enjoy a high Quality of Life.

The *Circles of Hope* will be the platform which serves as the first action step towards fostering a bond between the politicians from those political parties who wish to join in creating a new political vehicle on the march towards forming the *Next Government of Trinidad and Tobago*. As the political representatives focus on the issues and not on personalities and power the goal will be:

- How can we best serve the People?
- How can we transform our Country to one in which "every creed and race can find an equal place"?
- In what ways will we turbo charge our Economy so that all our People experience a Shared Prosperity?
- How can we improve the quality of life for each individual and in particular the poor and the disadvantaged?

The solutions proposed by these *Circles of Hope* will be presented to the People for their input and comment so that the wisdom and ingenuity of our People can be tapped and together we will formulate the ways in which we will reconstruct our Country which has been so ravaged by the politicians of the past.

In this way starting with the **Circles of Hope**, the unity our People so desperately ache for will emerge. This unity of action will create the platform for dialogue and collaboration among the leaders of the Parties. This will be the mechanism by which we explore the political vehicle through which we will achieve electoral victory - A political vehicle that will form the Government and transform the politics in Trinidad and Tobago. Never again must our Country be taken down the path of divisiveness that leads to destruction and disenfranchisement and emasculation of our People. Rather we will channel the creative energies of our People to establish a Country of which we can all be proud. A productive and secure

Country in which we can all live play and do business together in harmony, enjoying a sense of peace where all are treated fairly and justly.



V. Strategic Imperative for Winning Political Solution-Execution Approach

“An electoral agenda gets you into power, but the political agenda will sustain you in power. It is the government’s agenda that will give you credibility for the next round.”

- **Engaging Society in open Dialogue on Critical Issues**
- **Achieving Consensus of the Parties**
- **Winning the Trust of the People- direct Citizen Participation**
- **Opportunity for Uniting the People**

The COP believes that in addition to the Parties negotiating the Protocol which will underpin their actions as the Next Government it is vital that they engage the Society in open dialogue. The core issues of governance must find support from a critical mass of our People in order for the Next Government to enjoy widespread acceptance of their plans and policies. It is this dialogue which will enable our Society to experience and be involved in a real participatory democracy.

Our ultimate goal must not simply be to win an election but to create a vibrant Nationhood in which all our People feel that they can contribute to the development of our Country regardless of class, ethnicity, gender or cultural background. Indeed we should celebrate our diversity – which should be our greatest strength and not used by our politicians to tear our Society apart.

Having laid the groundwork of a **Platform for Governance**, the imperative of winning demands that electoral consensus among the key political players, including the United National Congress, the Tobago Organization of the People, the National Joint Action Committee and the Congress of the People is achieved. The COP does not come to this process of creating the political vehicle which will face the electorate with any pre-conceived notions as to the precise shape and form which such political vehicle will take.

In arriving at consensus between the parties each step will be conducted in such a way as to earn the **TRUST** of the People by engaging them in the process, in the Circles of Hope, the People’s Charter, the Principles and Codes of Political Contest and the Protocol for Politics and Governance and in the dialogue and debate in which we will engage in public.

Opportunity for Uniting the People

Unification is different from unity

- COP Party and Movement must engage in the opportunities emerging from the Politics of Change.
- The politics of change demands taking risk and bravely engaging in the battle for a One-Party Solution to fix the politics. The COP must be seen as leading and facilitating this One-Party Solution

- COP party and movement must transform itself into a people-driven, unifying force guided by Clarity of Values, passionate commitment to Nationhood and unwavering belief in building a Better Future for this Country. This united people force must find the appropriate formula for the necessary electoral politics to win the government while also creating attractive platform for governance.
- The future of this country should be decided on a one-to-one contest between a united and independent people party and the current party administering colonial administration of power guided by a philosophy of dependence.

February 24th 2010

