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MEDIA RELEASE

Subject: Declaration of the Start of the 2019 Dry Season

A Drier Than Usual Dry Season Has Started

The Trinidad and Tobago Meteorological Service (TTMS) is officially declaring the start of the 2019 Dry Season as the climatic patterns and changes in features are indicative of the region having transitioned to a much drier state.

Assessment of the criteria necessary for the onset of the Dry Season shows that the conditions have been met and are now entrenched. These conditions include, among other factors, the prevalence of strong westerly upper-level winds and a strong North Atlantic Sub-Tropical High pressure system over our region. This configuration has led to a tighter pressure gradient across the Southern Caribbean, resulting in observed gradual increase in the low level wind speeds from November 2018 to present. The intensification of the North Atlantic Sub-Tropical High pressure system has also significantly enhanced the strength of the trade wind inversion during past month of December 2018 and into the new year January 2019 resulting in a drier atmosphere with minimal cloud development.

The Dry Season is never without rainfall; therefore, the country can expect to see rainfall episodes occurring but not with the frequency and quantity of the transition months or the wet season. During the month of December 2018, evidence of impactful drying had occurred and is expected to continue into this year's dry season. The primary reason for these dry conditions is the influence of a developing El Niño in the central equatorial Pacific Ocean. This feature has normally been associated with drier than usual dry seasons in the past for Trinidad and Tobago.

Global and Regional Climate models is agreeing with anticipated drier than usual conditions over the region for the period January to May 2019. There is a high confidence (80%) of below normal rainfall totals over the period with deficits on average of 23% in Trinidad and 51% in Tobago. There may also be episodes of dry/hot spells as the dry season endures.

Likely impacts of the 2019 Dry Season include:

- Reduction in ground water recharge, surface water flows and rain-fed water availability.
- Increase in surface dryness as the season progresses, which enhances the potential for bush fires.
- Drier than average conditions enhance the chances for some agricultural pest and diseases to thrive.

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- Periods of excessive heat can increase the chances of heat stress on persons with heat sensitive ailments and heat exposed livestock, pets and other animals.

In light of the foregoing, the public is advised to conserve, store and manage water in a sustainable manner. It is also highly recommended for the public to refrain from burning rubbish in grassy or forested areas during the dry season. Citizens are advised to keep cool as much as possible and stay hydrated. Relevant agencies and ministries are advised to take measures to mitigate the potential impacts of the current Dry Season.

Please stay updated with our latest weather information and forecasts available on the TTMS Website www.metoffice.gov.tt and follow us on our various social media platforms.

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