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MEDIA RELEASE

Subject: Declaration of the Start of the 2017 Dry Season

Milder Dry Season but Impactful Drying Still Expected

The Trinidad and Tobago Meteorological Service (TTMS) is officially declaring the start of the 2017 Dry Season. Assessment of the criteria necessary for the onset of the Dry Season shows that the conditions have been met and are now entrenched. These include reduced rainfall rates due to a general reduction in moisture, the prevalence of westerly upper-level winds, and a North Atlantic Sub-Tropical High pressure system with great vertical depth displaced to lower latitudes.

These climatic patterns and changes in features are indicative of the region having transitioned to a drier state and typical of the onset of our Dry Season. This year had a more subtle beginning to the season than last year, primarily due to the borderline La Niña influences that appeared to exert a controlling influence on intra-seasonal climatic conditions temporarily, which at times contradicted some of the dry season onset signals, leading to the delayed onset.

The outlook for the 2017 Dry Season indicates impactful drying will occur most likely in late February through to March, with odds that are highest for near average rainfall totals for the season overall. The TTMS expects the latter half of February, all of March and most of April to be particularly hot and dry with hotter than average daytime and nighttime temperatures. As a result, there are very high odds for a large number of hot days (temperature greater than 34.0 °C) and relatively long periods of consecutive dry days, but especially so, during the heat season February to April. As a consequence, it is very likely that these months will produce hot spell conditions in the country.

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.

Likely Impacts of the 2017 Dry Season Include:

- Reduction in ground water recharge, surface water flows and rain-fed water availability;
- Increase in surface dryness which can lead to increase in dusty conditions;

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- Increased browning of weeds, grass, bush and some forest species as the season progresses;
- Drier and hotter conditions will increase bush and forest fire potential during the season;
- Drier conditions can increase the need to collect and store water in containers which can increase breeding areas for mosquitoes;
- Drier conditions have the potential to affect water reservoirs negatively which can impact the current tourism and carnival seasons;
- Hotter and drier conditions increase the chance for heat and water stress for crops, pastures and livestock;
- Drier and warmer conditions tend to favour better quality in some fruits and some outdoor activities;
- Stronger low level winds increase the potential for rough seas which can affect sea bathing and marine activities.

In light of the foregoing, the public is advised to conserve, store and manage water in a sustainable manner and to take measures to reduce the effects of prolonged exposure to sunshine and dusty conditions. It is also highly recommended for the public to refrain from burning rubbish in grassy or forested areas during the Dry Season. Relevant Agencies and Ministries are advised to take measures to mitigate the potential impacts of the current Dry Season.

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