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MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

THE ODPM HEIGHTENS READINESS PLANNING AS DRY SEASON 2022 NEARS

As we draw closer to the end of the 2021 Wet Season, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) along with its key stakeholders have already begun preparing for the upcoming Dry Season and its possible challenges. In light of this, on **Wednesday 15th December 2021**, the ODPM hosted its initial virtual Dry Season Preparation meeting to begin strategising for the 2022 Dry Season.

The CEO of the ODPM, Major General (Ret'd) Rodney Smart, thanked the representatives for attending the meeting and for the agencies' continued commitment to ensuring that whatever challenges the nation faces, they are ready to provide the citizenry with the service they expect. He added, *"One fire incident can result in tremendous loss to so many. I urge everyone to continue to work together and strengthen your preparations to respond to bush fires and other challenges within the COVID-19 environment."*

While the 2021 Dry Season was wetter than usual and therefore the country experienced much less bush fires, Mr Kaidar Kissoon, Meteorologist, of the Trinidad and Tobago Meteorological Service (TTMS), highlighted that Trinidad and Tobago can expect a drier than usual season due to below average rainfall.

With the stage set, the agencies also deliberated on various approaches that would help address reckless acts of bush fires and alleviate the associated impacts that occur throughout the country. The meeting discussed strategies to manage the impacts of bush fires, which often leaves its charred and smokey definitive markings on our mountain ranges, and forest reserves. At times this hazard also creates blinding smoke along the nation's highways, hampering driving conditions. Bush fires often poses a threat to homes, businesses and wildlife.

During the meeting, the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service and the Ministry of Agriculture's Forestry Division, spoke about their joint efforts for mitigating and responding to fires that impact homes, businesses, and hilly forested areas. To support their initiative, the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA) assured them of the availability of truck-borne water to assist the Fire Service and the Forest Rangers' efforts.

Additionally, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government re-affirmed its commitment to providing signage across municipalities with fire prevention and water conservation tips. Also attending the meeting were representatives of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS), Heritage Petroleum Company Ltd., the Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC), and Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company Limited (SWMCOL).

Following these robust discussions, the various agencies committed themselves to further engagements to ensure a safer 2022 Dry Season. In closing the meeting, facilitator Mr Jaishima Gowandan re-emphasised that fire prevention is everybody's business, and therefore the ODPM will continue to work with its partners to reduce disaster risk throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

PHOTOS AND CAPTIONS

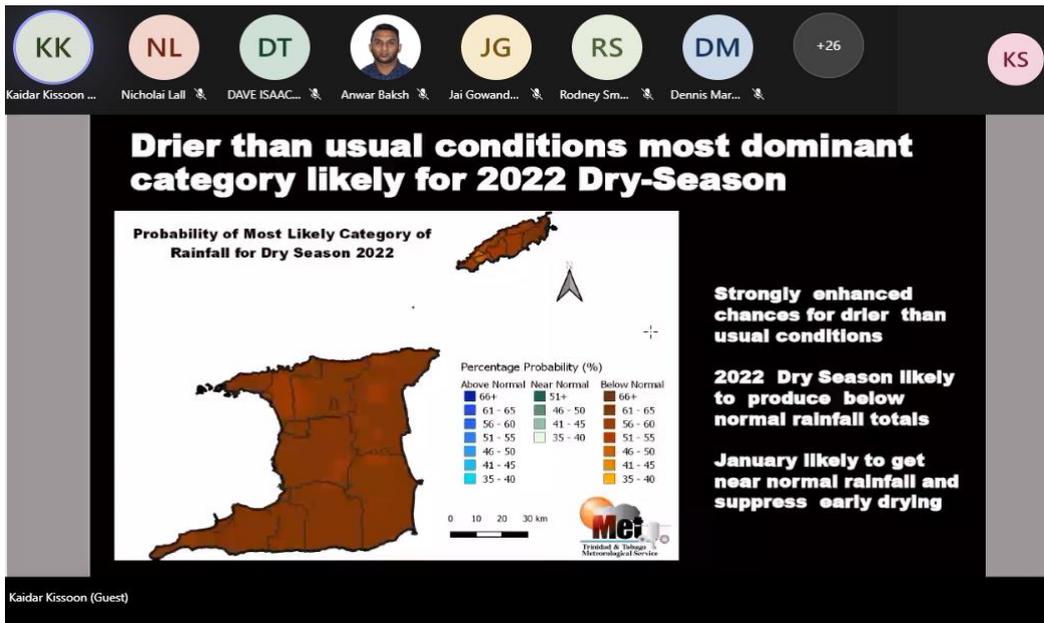


Photo and Caption 1:

A sample of the presentation from the TT MET Service 2022 Dry Season Outlook, by Mr. Kaidar Kissoon highlighting that Trinidad and Tobago is likely to experience drier than usual conditions this upcoming Dry Season 2022.

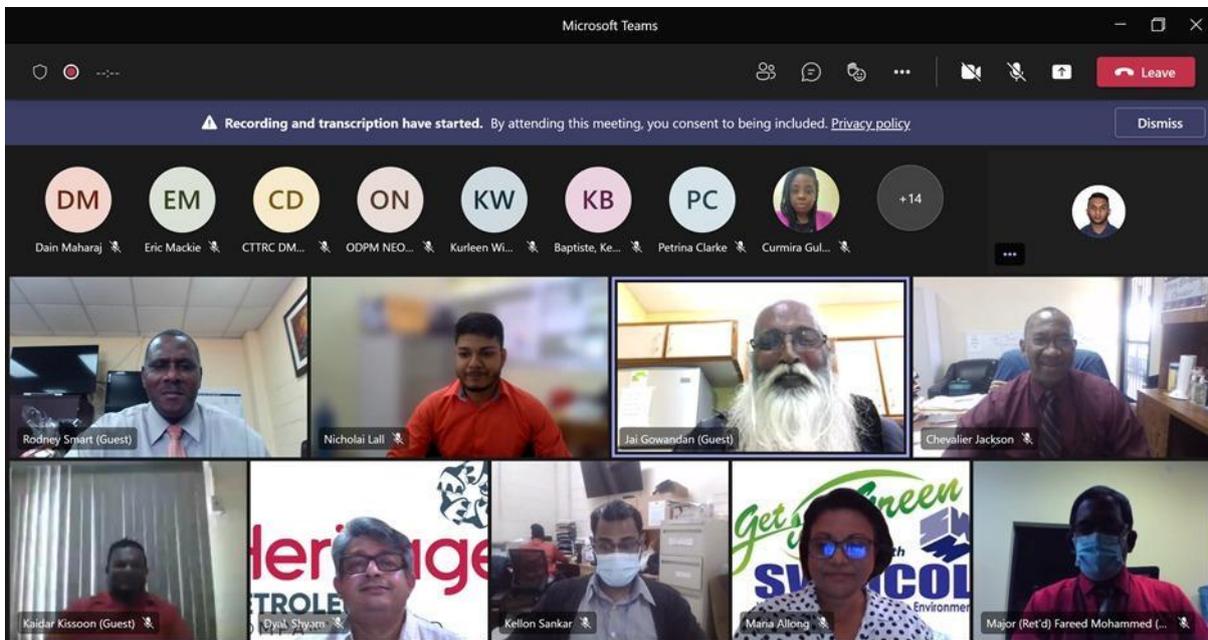


Photo and Caption 2:

A cross-section of the key stakeholders along with the ODPM representatives during the virtual *Preparation for the Forthcoming Dry Season 2022*.

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