

THE REPUBLIC OF  
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

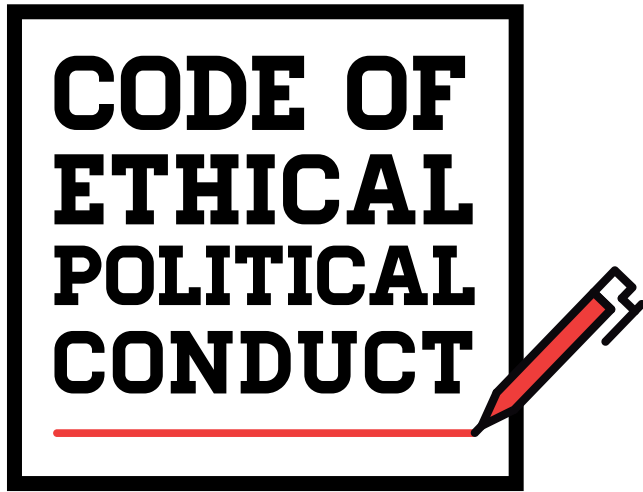
**CODE OF  
ETHICAL  
POLITICAL  
CONDUCT**

THE COUNCIL FOR  
RESPONSIBLE  
POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

*Monitoring and evaluating adherence to the Code*



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TRINIDAD & TOBAGO**



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## **CODE OF ETHICAL POLITICAL CONDUCT**

The Code of Ethical Political Conduct came into being in July 2014 and is intended to achieve the following objectives:

- 1. Fostering of democracy** through peaceful, free and fair elections conducted at regular intervals in which voters are permitted to cast their ballots freely, without interference, fear, intimidation or bribery.
- 2. Promotion of respect for human rights**, the pursuit of civil and political liberties, the tolerance of divergent opinions, full and active participation of all in the political process.
- 3. Encouraging participation in the electoral process** by the People and to uphold their right to make political choices.
- 4. Promoting an election process free from violence.**

## **FOUNDING ORGANIZATIONS**

The Code of Ethical Political Conduct was drawn up by various organizations representative of the society of Trinidad and Tobago. These organizations are signatories to the Code of Ethical Political Conduct. They are:

- Anglican Church
- Methodist Church
- Presbyterian Church
- Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha of Trinidad and Tobago
- Trinidad and Tobago Transparency Institute
- Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce
- Network of NGOs
- Trinidad and Tobago Publishers' and Broadcasters' Association
- Communication Workers' Union/FITUN
- Inter Religious Organization of Trinidad and Tobago
- ASJA
- Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Port of Spain

## **POLITICAL PARTIES THAT ARE SIGNATORIES**

To date there are five Political Parties that are signatories to the Code of Ethical Political Conduct. They are:

- Congress of the People (COP)
- Independent Liberal Party (ILP)
- Movement for Social Justice (MSJ)
- People's National Movement (PNM)
- United National Congress (UNC)

## **THE COUNCIL FOR RESPONSIBLE POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR**

*Monitoring and evaluating adherence to the Code*

This Council is a creation of the Code of Ethical Political Conduct with specific guidelines regarding its structure contained therein. At the meeting of the Council held on February 2nd 2015, nominations and elections of officers for the Council were conducted. It was also the first meeting at which all Political Parties that are signatories to the Code were represented.

### **Council Members**

- Chair: Dr. Bishnu Ragoonath
- Deputy Chair: Bishop Clive Abdulah
- Secretary: Ms. Leela Ramdeen
- Mr. Reginald Dumas
- Brother Noble Khan
- Mr. Ramjit Maharaj
- Ms. Lisa Henzell - Congress of the People
- Alderman Sunil Ramjitsingh - Independent Liberal Party
- Mr. Vincent Cabrera - Movement for Social Justice
- Mr. Ferdinand Ferreira - People's National Movement
- Mr. Nicholas Morris - United National Congress

## PREAMBLE

WHEREAS PURSUANT TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, THE PEOPLE OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

- **Have affirmed that the Nation of Trinidad and Tobago is founded upon:**
  1. Principles that acknowledge the supremacy of God;
  2. Faith in fundamental human rights and freedoms;
  3. The centrality of the family in a society of free men and women, and free institutions;
  4. The dignity of the human person; and
  5. The equal and inalienable rights with which all members of the human family are endowed by their Creator.
- **Have affirmed their respect for the principles of social justice and therefore believe that:**
  1. The operation of the economic system should result in the material resources of the community being so distributed as to subserve the common good;
  2. There should be adequate means of livelihood for all;
  3. Labour should not be exploited or forced by economic necessity to operate in inhumane conditions but that there should be opportunity for advancement on the basis of recognition of merit, ability and integrity.
- **Have asserted their belief in a democratic society in which:**
  1. All persons may, to the extent of their capacity, play some part in the institutions of national life and thus develop and maintain due respect for lawfully constituted authority;
  2. Freedom is founded upon respect for moral, ethical and spiritual values and the rule of law; and
  3. Provision is made for ensuring the protection in Trinidad and Tobago of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

- **Have asserted that forgiveness and reconciliation are integral to nation building:**

### **Whereas**

- The principles and beliefs enshrined in our constitution are best protected through the democratic process underpinned by fairness, the rule of law, freedom to express divergent opinions, equality of access to opportunities and through adherence to constitutional provisions that stipulate the rights and responsibilities of the citizen,
- It is the desire of the undersigned persons drawn from civil society organizations throughout Trinidad and Tobago including Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), Community Based Organizations (CBO), Media Houses, Trade Unions, Business Organizations and Religious Organizations (collectively the 'Civil Society Organizations'), to encourage Political Parties to endorse the principles and codes set out in the Code of Ethical Political Conduct for the common good of the People and in the national interest of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago,
- The Political Parties and their Candidates who are signatories hereto (respectively the 'Parties' and 'Candidates') have agreed to pledge themselves to the Code of Ethical Political Conduct which follows:

**NOW THEREFORE it is hereby agreed and declared by the Parties, Coalitions and their Candidates as follows:**

## **CODE OF ETHICAL POLITICAL CONDUCT**

### **OBJECTIVES**

This Code of Political Conduct (this 'Code') is intended to achieve the following objectives:

1. **Fostering of democracy** through peaceful, free and fair elections conducted at regular intervals in which voters are permitted to cast their ballots freely, without interference, fear, intimidation or bribery.

2. **Promotion of respect for human rights**, the pursuit of civil and political liberties, the tolerance of divergent opinions, full and active participation of all in the political process.
3. **Encouraging participation in the electoral process** by the People and to uphold their right to make political choices.
4. **Promoting an election process free from violence.**

## **SECTION 1: COMMITMENT**

THE PARTIES, COALITIONS AND THEIR CANDIDATES AGREE TO:

1. **Uphold the Constitution** and the spirit and letter of the laws relating to the holding of public activities and election campaigns.
2. **Maintain the highest moral principles and ethical standards** with respect to their conduct during the campaign, the elections and the post-election period.
3. **Cooperate with the police** in maintaining law and order during election campaigns.
4. **Promote and enforce respect, tolerance, harmony and peace** amongst their supporters and the general public during the campaign, the elections and in the post-election period by being positive role models.
5. **Nominate a representative** who will be responsible for all matters related to this Code and who will liaise with the Council for Responsible Political Behaviour as established under this Code of Ethical Political Conduct.
6. **Refrain from practices that promote divisiveness** in the Society and commit to the removal of any structures (behavioural, cultural, social or organizational) which reinforce divisiveness.
7. Take deliberate steps to publicly **disassociate themselves from criminal elements and criminal activity.**
8. Confine their **criticism of other Political Parties** to policies and programmes, past record and work.



9. Ensure that **meeting organizers** seek the assistance of police or other state assigned organizations on duty, to deal with persons disturbing or disrupting a meeting. Organizers should not take action against such persons.
10. **Commit, while acknowledging each other's past and present errors and prejudices**, to supporting one another in a common effort to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence; to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace; to ensure the peaceful conduct of this and future elections.
11. **Make this code known to supporters** and uphold its adherence.
12. **Uphold the integrity of the electoral process.**
13. **Ensure that their conduct is above reproach.**

## **SECTION 2: PROHIBITED CONDUCT**

THE PARTIES, COALITIONS AND THEIR CANDIDATES AGREE TO:

1. **Not offer** any inducement or reward, for example money, groceries or other benefits, to another person to -
  - a) Join or not to join a Party;
  - b) Attend or not to attend a public meeting, march, demonstration, rally or other public political event;
  - c) Vote or not to vote, or to vote or not to vote in any particular way; or
  - d) Refuse a nomination as a Candidate or to withdraw as a Candidate.
2. **Not discriminate** on the grounds of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, class, religion or belief, or seek to mobilize support by reference to race, sex, gender, religion or class.
3. **Not make false or defamatory allegations in print or speech** in connection with an election in respect of a Party, its Candidates, representatives or members.

4. **Not use language or act** in a way that may -
  - a) Provoke violence; or
  - b) Intimidate Candidates, members of Parties, representatives or supporters of Parties or Candidates, or voters; or
  - c) Invite, encourage or foster hatred, resentment or any form of violence.
5. **Not seek** to assassinate the character of or make defamatory comments about any individual, family, professional group or section of the community.
6. **Not deface**, or induce anyone to unlawfully remove or destroy, or deface the billboards, placards, posters or any other election materials of a Party or Candidate.
7. **Not unreasonably prevent** any other person access to voters for the purpose of voter education, collecting signatures, recruiting members, raising funds or canvassing support for a Party or Candidates.
8. **Not abuse a position of power**, privilege or influence, including parental, patriarchal, traditional or employment authority to influence the conduct or outcome of an election.
9. **Not engage, recruit, or deploy** any individual(s) for the purpose of violence, intimidation or harassment, including intimidation by congregating in groups wearing similar identifiable colours at or near to election stations on election day.
10. **Not deface** public or private property and structures.
11. **Not permit** the inappropriate or unauthorized use or abuse of minors or animals in the campaign process.
12. **Not plagiarize** or disparage the symbols, colours or acronyms of others Parties.
13. **Not permit** the use and abuse of State resources for political campaigns.
14. **Not indulge** in negative campaigning or advertising or any action which would bring the political process into disrepute.

15. **Not use funds** derived from any source, public or private, to improperly influence electoral choices.
16. **Not knowingly associate** with persons in their pursuit of illegal activities and/or any kind of violence but rather actively cooperate with the security forces to bring such persons before the law.
17. **Not criticize** aspects of the private lives of Candidates, their families, not connected with the public activities of the leaders or Candidates of other Parties.
18. **Not issue advertisements** or other marketing material the cost of which is borne out of public funds.
19. **Not encourage** or permit alcohol or other drugs to be used in public during campaign activities on Election Day.
20. **Not threaten** or cause any persons to be threatened with loss of their jobs if they support or refuse to support a Political Party by attending or failing to attend political meetings.

### **SECTION 3: THE MEDIA**

THE PARTIES, COALITIONS AND THEIR CANDIDATES AGREE TO:

1. **Respect** the right of the media to fairly present balanced reports and information before, during and after an election.
2. **Respect** the right of all Parties and Candidates to equity in access to the media.
3. **Permit** access by members of the media to public political meetings, marches, demonstrations and rallies of which they have control.
4. **Take** all reasonable steps to ensure that journalists are not subjected to harassment, intimidation, hazard, threat or physical assault by any of their representatives or supporters.
5. **Refrain** from using State advertising to induce media houses to support or degrade a particular Party.

6. **Ensure** that their Parties participate in not less than two live televised and radio public debates organized by a Debates Commission agreed to by the Council as stated in Section 5: at least one of which will be a Leaders debate.
7. **Be allowed** equity of access to State owned media.

## **SECTION 4: THE CAMPAIGN**

THE PARTIES, COALITIONS AND THEIR CANDIDATES AGREE TO:

1. Chairpersons of all political campaign events appeal to supporters and the general public for peaceful behavior.
2. Such steps as the Police may direct are carried out so as to minimize obstruction of roads and inconvenience to the general public whenever political activities are held at roadsides.
3. All private and public property rights are respected.
4. Measures are taken to clean the environs immediately following the holding of political events.
5. Election campaign advertisements are removed within 30 days after the elections.
6. The use of State owned resources to support any Political Parties, Coalitions or any Candidate is absolutely prohibited other than as stated in Section 3.7.
7. All donations in cash or kind are accepted based on:
  - A “know your donor” principle;
  - Due diligence measures (similar to the requirement in financial institutions to identify and to report suspicious transactions) should be undertaken so as to protect against ‘dirty money’ contaminating the process;
  - It will cause its accounts, including donations, to be audited by a qualified accountant and presented to the Council for Responsible Political Behaviour established under Section 5 below within 90 days after the holding of each election.

8. Every person is free to go about his/her lawful business without restriction, harassment or intimidation.
9. From the time elections are announced; they (Parties, Coalitions and Candidates) shall not permit members or ministers and other governmental authorities or enterprises to use State resources to publish promotional material which identifies any minister or Candidate or adopts the slogan of any Party.
10. Recognize and acknowledge the rights of accredited observers and monitors at polling stations for the purpose of observing the conduct of elections.
11. International observers who subscribe to the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers are invited to conduct a review of all General Elections.

## **SECTION 5: THE COUNCIL FOR RESPONSIBLE POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR**

**A Council for Responsible Political Behaviour ('Council')** shall be set up to monitor and evaluate adherence to this Code of Ethical Political Conduct by the Political Parties and their Candidates who are signatories hereto.

The Council shall be constituted upon signing of this Code. Each Political Party which is a signatory hereto shall appoint one person to the Council (the **'Political Appointees'**).

The Organizations who are signatories to the Code of Ethical Political Conduct, other than the Political Parties (the 'Founding Organizations'), shall collectively appoint such number of persons as is equal to the number of Political appointees plus one who are not aligned to any Political Party.

The public will be encouraged to **report breaches** of this code to the Council.

The functions of the Council will be to:

1. Conduct public education around the Code and issues that civil society would like politicians to address on the platform.
2. Monitor the election campaign activities and conduct of Parties and their Candidates.
3. Network with bodies involved in monitoring elections in Trinidad and Tobago and with regional and international bodies which place governance as an important objective.
4. Actively engage different networks which can bring moral suasion to bear on the conduct of Political Parties.
5. Implement related activities consistent with the spirit of this Code as mandated by the broader body of civil society.
6. Report to the broader body of civil society, and through it, to the public.
7. Rate the behavior of Political Parties, Coalitions and their Candidates in accordance with the Code and based upon time periods as decided by the Council and made public.

**Before proceeding to sanction any Political Party or Candidate, if any Political Appointee so requests, the Council will consult with an international election observer group that has adopted the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers.**



**CODE OF  
ETHICAL  
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**The Council For Responsible  
Political Behaviour**

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