

**Mr. Franz Manderson
Chief Immigration Officer
Speech for
Immigration Week: the Official Launch
9:00 am, Monday 21 January 2008
Westin Casuarina Resort & Spa**

With the protocol already established, I will simply say Distinguished Guests- Welcome

I extend my warmest thanks to you all for being here to share our first observance of Immigration Week in the Cayman Islands. This morning we officially launch a week of celebrations which are deeply significant, not only for the Department of Immigration, but for our entire country.

As you may know, we attended a church service yesterday and events will culminate this Friday with an awards function to recognize those whose outstanding efforts have contributed to the growth and development of our department.

Immigration Week presents an opportunity to share with our communities some of the far-reaching changes which are positively impacting how we serve our customers. It will also showcase some of the legislative changes that reinforce the Government's commitment to protecting Caymanians, providing clarity and certainty for employers and work permit holders and promoting inward investment. Finally, it will allow us to exhibit our re-branding efforts.

The Immigration Department was created in 1971, and has worked tirelessly since that time to secure the borders of these beautiful islands, and to contribute to the prosperity of the Islands by managing the labour market. Thanks to dedicated staff, past and present, the department has evolved into a

modern and technologically-driven entity which increasingly places a high premium on customer service.

It is critical that we continue to sustain our efforts because more than any other area of our national life, the threads of immigration have become most deeply-woven into the fabric of our society. The impact helps to shape contemporary social and economic performance but even more importantly, it also sets the course for future prosperity—and for the preservation of the very values that make us who we are.

The Cayman Islands' economic success is, in large measure, owed to the combined efforts of Caymanians and non- Caymanians alike, team members who work shoulder to shoulder to make this country a great place in which to live. Our Immigration policies therefore, are geared to balancing the rights of all who live and work here.

Today we will be showcasing our service to the public, in particular our call center and improvements made at our public counter. Last year the call centre dealt with some 50,000 calls and the public counter handled some 90,000 walk in customers. Let me pause briefly to salute the staff members who handled this large volume of customers. The quality of their service can be measured in part by public feedback including the fact that 14 members of staff were nominated for the Governors' prestigious FACE awards. I am pleased to say that one of my staff was among the winners.

In addition to our efforts to improve customer service we have also begun to increase our law enforcement activities to ensure that **all** segments of our population respect and observe the immigration law.

We will accordingly be intensifying our efforts to prosecute breaches of the Immigration Law. We will be holding employers and employees who break the Law to full account.

However, while we will be intensifying our enforcement efforts we will also expend significant resources on public education which we hope will prevent the commission of immigration offences.

These considerations have helped to shape some Immigration Week activities. This Wednesday, for example, we are staging a workshop for Civil Registrars and Marriage Officers to begin the process of educating them about their roles in upholding immigration laws and preventing marriages of convenience.

This week too, we will be visiting West Bay and Cayman Brac to mark the start of our district evening series. Senior immigration officials will join me in visiting districts to discuss immigration matters with residents and hear their concerns.

Shortly we are launching our new website which is also geared towards further empowering our clientele by providing all the information they need at the click of a button. The site also signals our firm belief in freedom of information and reinforces our pledge to keep open the lines of communication with the public.

Hon. Chief Secretary, I hope that you will agree that the Immigration Department has made a significant contribution to your vision for the civil service. For the benefit of others, I will take the liberty of quoting you:

“My vision for the Civil Service is for it to be modern and energetic in its approach, professional in its attitude and its service, highly respected by the community, and positively contributing to the development of the Cayman Islands.”

I thank government, the business community and the wider public for your continued support and I invite everyone to come out and share the Immigration Week experience.

Thank You