

CLOSING REMARKS BY

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PERMANENT SECRETARY,  
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

AT THE INFORMATION SESSION

**THE CARIFORUM/EU EPA:  
CHARTING THE WAY FORWARD**

7:30 AM,  
WEDNESDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2008  
THE BALLROOM  
TRINIDAD HILTON AND CONFERENCE CENTRE  
LADY YOUNG ROAD  
BELMONT

- Dr Lenny Saith, Minister of Trade and Industry
- Government Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and Other Senior Government Officials
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Representatives of the Business Community
- Representatives of International Agencies, Civil Society, Academia, Trade Unions
- Members of the Media
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have come to the end of our session here today, and thanks to all of you - participants, presenters, Moderator, Resource personnel - this has been an informative and lively event, and truly has provided us at the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) with critical feedback for the way forward in implementing the EPA. As Dr Saith indicated, today's event was designed to brief stakeholders on the many dimensions of the CARIFORUM/EU EPA and to discuss the process of implementation - I believe we have accomplished our goal this morning.

Working here at MTI, I can assure you that it is a challenging task to walk the narrow path between the demands for greater protection and the advocates for more rapid liberalisation. It is important that you understand that we often have to balance these two differing perspectives in the drive to pursue initiatives which we see as beneficial to Trinidad and Tobago.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry believes that one of the key factors for conducting successful trade negotiations is the active collaboration of both public and private sectors, working together in the interests of the wider civil society.

The input of those who struggle everyday with the realities of commercial enterprise and those ultimately affected by it are essential to craft a workable path towards economic integration and free trade. In this regard, I wish to once more thank all of you, our special guests for being generous with your time this morning. We know that we have covered a lot of information and invite you to contact MTI should you have any additional questions or concerns.

I also wish to thank our presenters for their dynamic and informative contributions, our resource personnel, here at MTI and from the State and private sectors, and last but definitely by no means least, the entire team at MTI for their hard work, diligence and commitment which made this event possible.

From today's event we move unto a series of smaller meetings with private sector stakeholders, Trade Facilitation Agencies, and special interest groups to discuss the impact of the EPA in greater depth and their specific roles in the implementation process. We will also embark on a communications campaign for the wider public

which will involve both print and electronic media and presentations to special interest groups, e.g. the University, NGOs, civil society groups, etc.

This is indeed an exciting time for us in Trinidad and Tobago, as we take our place on the global stage as a trading nation. While again the EPA is not perfect, there is still much that can be derived from it, and thankfully for us in T&T our economy has a depth and strength which will enable us to benefit and capitalize in a range of areas.

Thank you once again for joining us here today and we look forward to your comments and queries in the weeks ahead which will provide us with a solid framework for response.

I thank you.