



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

# *Initiation of the Global Services Promotion Programme and Skills for Global Services*

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R E M A R K S

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON  
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY**  
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ARTHUR LOK JACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Goodmorning.

## **SERVICES SECTOR IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

Ladies and Gentlemen, given the economic realities of depressed commodity prices and lower domestic production levels, there is an urgent need to create, new sectors, areas, and business models that would allow Trinidad and Tobago to earn foreign exchange and create new revenue streams.

In this context, account must be taken of the contribution of the services sector which has long been a pillar of our economy. It is critical to Trinidad and Tobago's future economic development. It accounts for at least 54% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and allows for the creation of value-adding and knowledge-based opportunities that are aligned with our national resources, and in particular our human resource and skills development capacities.

The Services Sector has been recognised as a viable and significant source of **foreign exchange** for Trinidad and Tobago. For the last five years, according to the Balance of Payment Accounts, Trinidad and Tobago's Service exports grew from US\$868 million in 2010 to US\$1 billion in 2015, with the main sub-sectors being transport, financial services and tourism. The Services Sector, as a whole, **employs** 80% of the national labour force.

Despite the importance of our services sector, services exports (while growing in recent years) are not at the levels it should be due in part, to the **underutilization of technology**. This in part is evidenced by the 2015 World Economic Forum's Global Information Technology Report which ranks Trinidad and Tobago favourably on indicators that measure the availability of technology, but poorly on indicators that measure the utilization of such technology. The Global Services Promotion Program is an important step in bridging this gap and accelerating our use of technology for productive purposes and long-term and sustained growth.

One of the most important outcomes of this Global Services Programme is the role it will play in the diversification of the national economy. In its diversification drive, the Ministry of Trade and Industry is spearheading specific policies and programmes to take advantage of the nexus between IT and Services, as well as IT as Services.

## **TARGETED SECTORS**

The MTI has already set in motion the implementation of a National Services Policy inclusive of an Action which will be implemented during the third quarter of Fiscal 2017. Undoubtedly, this will assist us in better understanding our strengths and weaknesses in developing and exploiting existing and new businesses in the Services sector, especially those that are IT-related.

Today marks the initiation of the Global Services Promotion Programme, I wish to highlight that the MTI has been working assiduously over the past seven years to create an environment in which IT is used to promote efficiency, transparency, cost-effectiveness, and bridge the gaps through IT services that exist between Government, the private sector, and citizens. After three phases of development, and with more than 6,500 registered users, TTBizLink currently hosts 47 transactional e-services administered by 24 government departments across nine separate Ministries.

The Global Services Programme led by the Ministry of Planning and Development, will go hand-in-hand with the current work of TTBizLink, and ensure that our economy is not left behind by adopting technology to forge a path of sustainable growth and development.

The improvement of government services through the utilization of technology will continue, as already the Government has begun work with the IDB to enhance the trade performance and business facilitation environment in Trinidad and Tobago by strengthening the TTBizLink platform at a cost of US\$25 Million over 5 years.

In order for Trinidad and Tobago to facilitate IT-enabled Services, an enabling environment (infrastructure and regulatory) must be in place, especially if those Services such as accounting, financial analysis, call centre services, architectural drawings, health-record transcription, among other services, are to be developed for export and compete with countries within and outside the region.

### **TAMANA INTECH PARK/ SEZS**

The Tamana Industrial and Technology (InTech) Park is an example of one such space that will serve as a centre for technology firms in both services and manufacturing, and forms part of the Government's larger Special Economic Zones initiative.

The Government has already installed and tested the Fiber Optic Broad Band Network throughout Phase 1 of the Park and completed the Civil engineering works on 21 Lots (over 74 acres) for the tenanting of new investors. The completion and full operationalization of the Tamana InTech Park is a priority of the Government and is fundamental to the success of the Global Services Promotion Programme and Skills for Global Services.

But while large investors and rooms filled with hundreds of technical workers are important, we cannot overlook the hundreds and possibly thousands of individuals who are confident and skilled enough to export their services or products across the world, needing little more than a device with an internet connection.

### **E-COMMERCE**

That is why the Ministry of Trade and Industry is forging ahead with a **National e-Commerce Policy** and participating in the e-Business Roundtable, to bring forward our knowledge and understanding of the Services sector to help develop a stronger, more secure regulatory platform in which e-commerce can evolve.

## CONCLUSION

The global IT-enabled Services market has been one of the most dynamic of the 21st Century and has increased almost exponentially in recent years. ICT is an essential element of any country's development in the 21st century, underpinning the creation of a modern, competitive economy in a knowledge and technology-driven world.

Trinidad and Tobago for far too long as sat idly back and seen other countries move forward in this area. We have significant and skilled human capital, advanced telecommunications infrastructure, are native English speakers and have a relatively strong regulatory environment, but we need to use these strengths to our advantage. If we are to become synonymous with high quality services, **competitiveness** and **productivity**, this Global Services Promotion Program is a necessary and essential step in doing so.

Thank you.