



Media Release

SENATOR GOPEE-SCOON: 'BANKS CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COUNTRY'S OVERALL ECONOMIC GROWTH'

May 25, 2017:- "CIBC FirstCaribbean International Bank has been operating and serving Trinidad and Tobago for twelve years and its expansion is noteworthy, as it underscores the viability of Trinidad and Tobago's financial sector in the face of economic challenges". These were the opening words of Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry at the recent Ribbon cutting Ceremony for the opening of the CIBC FirstCaribbean International Bank, Chaguanas branch on Wednesday 24 May, 2017.

Minister Gopee-Scoon noted that "**in the local context, banks continue their role in contributing to our overall economic growth. Together with insurance and real estate, financial services form the largest part of the services sector and the second largest contributor to GDP, approximately 17% or TT\$16 billion. Not only has the banking sector been a major contributor to GDP, but its growth has outpaced the country's economic expansion; so as GDP contracted by 1.2% in 2015, the financial sector grew by 1.9%**". She said, "**These figures are a testament to the robustness of the local banking sector which can be attributed to progressive management systems and overall competitive business strategies**". Minister Gopee-Scoon urged the large commercial banks not to overlook the returns by individual Micro and Small and Medium sized enterprises (MSMEs). She said "**a small loan to a small firm provides jobs for a small number of people; however, the multiplier effect is not to be underestimated**".

Speaking on the main reforms being led by the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Trade and Industry Minister indicated that the likely implementation of a Secured Transaction and Collateral Registry System, will allow businesses to use their moveable property (intellectual property, accounts receivables, machinery and equipment) as collateral. According to a 2010 study conducted by the International Financial Corporation of

the World Bank Group, the total credit gap in Trinidad and Tobago was estimated at US\$3.44 billion despite the high levels of liquidity in the financial system. Such a constraint stifles business growth and inhibits economic development. She said ***"The Ministry is developing a policy to enhance the secured transactions regime and has already conducted a two-phased diagnostic mission with several stakeholders, including the Bankers' Association of Trinidad and Tobago"***. Minister urged the CIBC and other members of the Banking Association to ***"move a little beyond your comfort zones and to explore opportunities in the new sectors for development. These are avenues for you to capture a larger clientele and create newly defined and differentiated credit lines and facilities which in turn can increase shareholder value and the banks' profits. Such an outcome will bring benefits to all involved and influence positively the socio-economic development of our country"***.

Mr. Gary Brown, Chief Executive Officer, CIBC FirstCaribbean International Bank, in his Remarks stated that ***"this new branch is a significant achievement for us as we strive to remain relevant and responsive to the banking needs of our clients. This banking Center is an example of how we are investing in our business and how we will continue to invest in Trinidad's economy and the Caribbean Region"***.

Mr. Mark St. Hill, Chairman, FirstCaribbean International Bank, Trinidad and Tobago noted that ***"the opening of the Chaguanas Branch is the commencement of our expansion strategy in Trinidad and is another successful milestone on our journey of transformation as a bank in creating a banking environment that allows us to deliver on our brand promise to our clients"***.

The Ceremony included a tour of the new state of the art facility.