



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

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S NATIONAL AID FOR TRADE LAUNCH

.....
FEATURE ADDRESS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

.....

26 APRIL, 2017

Good Morning to All.

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be here this morning at the Launch of Trinidad and Tobago's National Aid for Trade Strategy 2016 to 2019.

Trinidad and Tobago's Government Policy Framework undertakes to proactively address the challenges faced by all stakeholders in the commercial, manufacturing and industrial sectors; to increase competitiveness; to promote diversification and to expand entry into international markets.

In pursuit of this undertaking, the Ministry of Trade and Industry is charged with the responsibility to grow trade, business and investment, particularly, through driving the non-energy sectors of the economy. Today's Launch, signifies this Government's commitment towards supporting its exporters and enhancing trade.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry is focused on overcoming the constraints, which impede this country's ability, to fully exploit global trading opportunities. One such mechanism which would allow us to do this is the implementation of the Aid for Trade Strategy. This Strategy is geared towards matching donor funding with the needs of the country to build the supply side capacity and trade related infrastructure. This means that the Government will now have a structured programme of trade related project interventions which can be used to target specific donor funding. Donors will now be able to use Trinidad and Tobago's Aid for Trade Strategy as a framework for mobilizing resources to address the trade priorities of Trinidad and Tobago and the related projects. For our exporters the Strategy provides a unique opportunity to obtain resources to address critical constraints that hinder their capacity to trade.

As we may all be aware, trade openness can transform a country as it significantly contributes to economic growth and sustainable development. This Aid for Trade Strategy is of primary importance for a country like Trinidad and Tobago, which at this time is seeking to diversify its exports in the non-energy sectors.

However, simply opening the economy to international trade is not enough. Currently, Trinidad and Tobago faces numerous trade-related challenges in its domestic environment. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is therefore focused on addressing such challenges as, the lack of internationally accredited testing facilities, inadequate financing mechanisms, underdeveloped market intelligence, congestion at the ports, and absence of payment mechanisms to facilitate e-commerce.

The Aid for Trade initiative was launched in December 2005 at the World Trade Organisation's Sixth Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong. Countries were subsequently encouraged to develop an Aid for Trade Strategy to streamline and bridge the gap between donors and developing countries' needs. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) serves as an anchor for global discussions on Aid for Trade and currently conducts global reviews of Aid for Trade every two years.

This Strategy launched today presents a significant far-reaching and substantial step forward. The Trinidad and Tobago National Aid for Trade Strategy was finalized in 2016 by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and approved by Cabinet. The Strategy covers a three year period from 2016 to 2019. It presents a coherent framework of priority areas, identified by domestic business support organisations, Ministries and agencies, necessary to address the challenges faced in expanding trade in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Aid for Trade framework consists of three pillars: Export Diversification, Competitiveness and Trade Facilitation. Each Pillar contains, objectives, priority areas and projects that are aligned with Government's National Development Policy, Vision 2030.

One of the priority areas under the export diversification pillar of Trinidad and Tobago's Aid for Trade Strategy is to build the productive capacity of sectors targeted for diversification. This will meet the objective to expand 'emerging' product lines.

The matter of Competitiveness is influenced by numerous factors including the institutional environment, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, technical readiness and business sophistication. Trinidad and Tobago's National Aid for Trade Strategy aims to further increase our competitiveness through the inclusion of projects under its competitiveness pillar to strengthen the National Quality Infrastructure, increase access to finance, upgrade the skills of exporters and to identify, use and manage intellectual property.

For Trinidad and Tobago, the Aid for Trade Strategy will seek to enhance trade facilitation. The Strategy outlines priority projects with the objectives of increasing the efficiency of Maritime Transport, expanding and upgrading port facilities and utilizing e-commerce opportunities.

At the international level, the impact of the Aid for Trade initiative thus far has been successful at promoting export diversification, competitiveness and trade facilitation at the International level. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, in conducting its monitoring exercise collected a number of case stories to show clear results of how aid-for-trade programmes are helping developing countries build the human, institutional and infrastructural capacity that they require to integrate into regional and global markets. The results reported ranged from increased export volumes and employment to shorter customs clearance times.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development research found that one dollar invested in Aid for Trade leads to nearly 8 additional dollars in exports from all developing countries.

By example, Through Aid for Trade, El Salvador and Honduras have reduced clearance times at the port from 62 minutes to an average of eight minutes.

Trinidad and Tobago has been the recipient of a significant amount of Aid, either through loans, grants or technical cooperation. I must thank our entire donor community for their continued support towards the growth and development of our country.

Receiving aid is just one part of the equation. We understand that to achieve the effective results from aid, factors such as collaboration, ownership and monitoring and evaluation are essential for successful aid-for-trade programmes.

The Strategy is designed to facilitate more meaningful dialogue between donors, key government Ministries and Agencies and Business Support Organisations. In a time of scarce resources, the collaboration amongst stakeholders is critical. Through collaboration we can ensure that there is no duplication of efforts and that the aid received is effectively targeted and utilized in a timely manner to achieve the successful outcomes intended.

While the Ministry of Trade and Industry will have general oversight for the implementation of the Aid for Trade Strategy, country ownership at the highest political level and effective intra-governmental co-ordination will ensure successful implementation of the Strategy.

The Paris Declaration on Aid states that the first requirement to improve the effectiveness of aid for trade is enhanced transparency. As such, donors and recipient countries have a responsibility to report on the progress of implementation of projects and the results achieved.

Trinidad and Tobago's National Aid for Trade Strategy includes a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism. An Aid for Trade Monitoring Committee has been established. Stakeholders such as the Ministry of Planning and Development; the Ministry of Agriculture Land and Fisheries; the Ministry of Health, the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association and the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce are expected to actively participate in this Committee. The committee will meet biennially to discuss inter alia implementation challenges, findings, and lessons learnt. It is this organized platform which provides a strong incentive to both donors and recipients for advancing the Aid for Trade agenda.

Trinidad and Tobago, views itself as not only recipients of aid but also trade partners. The Government therefore encourages investment to build up trade capacity and recognizes that a possible solution is a package of investment in which aid might play a catalyzing role. The Government views the private sector as the engine that sustains economic growth and as such we must continue to engage the private sector, both in terms of implementation on the ground and as a potential source of financing. I strongly encourage the private sector to become actively involved in the implementation of this Strategy to ensure that aid also promotes 'investment for trade'.

In closing, I wish to reassure you of the Ministry of Trade and Industry's commitment to implementing this Strategy. It is vital that we maximize the results that the Aid for Trade Strategy can deliver. I therefore urge all collaborating donors in receipt of project proposals to continue to be committed partners and all participating Ministries and Agencies to take ownership. I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to the participating organizations for their interest, dedication and willingness to be a part of this Launch.

I thank you.