



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

*LAUNCH AND WORKSHOP
ON THE PROGRAMME
FOR THE ACCREDITATION
OF PUBLIC
LABORATORIES*

.....
ADDRESS

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

11TH JUNE, 2019

Salutations

- Mr. Lawford Dupres – Chairman, Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) and Members of the TTBS Board
- Mr. Farz Khan - Board Member, TTBS and Director & Chief Chemist, Chemistry Food & Drug Division
- Mr. Derek Luk Pat – Executive Director, TTBS
- Mrs. Zobida Khan-Mohammed Director, Trinidad Public Health Laboratory
- Ms. Karlene Lewis, Manager, Laboratory Accreditation Service (TTLABS)
- Members of the Laboratory Accreditation Committee
- Management and Staff of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards
- Specially invited guests
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning to you all,

It gives me great pleasure to address you today at the launch of the programme and workshop for the accreditation of public laboratories in Trinidad and Tobago. This marks the commencement of an initiative seeking to improve the competency and reliability of testing and calibration services of public laboratories throughout our nation. This initiative is imperative as we continue to improve the quality infrastructure and culture of quality in Trinidad and Tobago to support a diverse and competitive economy.

Today's forum, underscoring the importance of international standards, is timely coming just two days after the global commemoration of World Accreditation Day on June 9, 2019. It is expected that today's workshop will allow public laboratories to have a greater understanding of the accreditation process, their respective requirements to achieve accreditation status and to identify possible challenges along the way. It is hoped that it will also begin the process for identifying the first two public laboratories to be accredited.

Accurate test results and reports are vital not only for the wellbeing of citizens but various stakeholder groups who use them every day as the basis for making important social and economic decisions: for instance, the results produced by the Forensic Science Centre on crime scene evidence or the Chemistry Food and Drug Division for laboratory services in the areas of food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices, pesticides and toxic chemicals.

It is the trustworthiness of such results which supports a more robust decision making process especially in matters having legal, financial, commercial and/or medical consequences.

As the line Ministry with responsibility for the Trinidad we are pleased to support activities seeking to improve quality benchmarks in Trinidad and Tobago. As you may be aware, the National Quality Policy

was approved by Cabinet in 2018 and seeks to improve the quality infrastructure in Trinidad and Tobago with the aim of creating a strong quality culture.

The Policy sets out the objectives and strategies of the country in terms of the development, strengthening, reform and use of the National Quality Infrastructure to satisfy Trinidad and Tobago's economic and societal needs. This is generally understood as the collection of institutions in both the public and private sectors, which provide a first tier of services including metrology, standardization and accreditation. These three fundamentals are necessary to support the next level of Quality Infrastructure, namely the conformity assessment service providers in the areas of inspection, testing, and certification.

The Policy is intended to help Trinidad and Tobago's business sector to exploit commercial opportunities, to compete in global markets and to assist local firms in demonstrating compliance with quality requirements and trade rules.

The continued assurance of Trinidad and Tobago's reputation as a provider of quality products and services in the local and international markets achieved through an effective National Quality System, supports continual improvement and increased competitiveness in the market place. With quality as both a strategic and enabling business approach, it is envisaged that the policy will also be an instrument that will contribute to higher levels of productivity, innovation and consumer health and environmental protection over the coming years, while at the same time creating a culture which supports a diverse economy leading to sustainable development.

The Policy is structured around four key components:

- **Governance and Institution Building** – which focuses on projects to build high-level governance entities such as the National Quality Council for the strategic oversight of the Policy
- **Regulatory Reform and Policy Integration** – which focuses on projects associated with the revision of quality related acts and regulations
- **Physical Infrastructure, Capacity Building and Organizational Strengthening** – which is associated with projects assessing the quality infrastructural needs of the various sectors in the economy and the undertaking of specialized quality-related training, where necessary
- **Enabling a Quality Culture and Proactive Environment** –emphasizing projects which promote quality culture, principles and practices so as to build a quality conscious Trinidad and Tobago

One of the projects under the component Physical Infrastructure Development, Capacity Building and Organizational Strengthening of the Policy is the execution of this Programme for the Accreditation of Public Laboratories. During 2019, the aim of the programme is to assist at least two (2) public laboratories to prepare and establish their respective management systems for accreditation in support of at least one scope of testing or calibration, and by 2030 to have all public laboratories accredited. Currently, there are forty-five (45) listed public laboratories in Trinidad and Tobago and the aim is to start with at least two (2) labs accredited this year.

The accreditation of public laboratories will assist with the improvement of governance and service excellence for these organizations and the public service with areas of conformity assessment activities. In doing so, this will contribute to the achievement of the objectives under the National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (Vision 2030):

Specifically, Goal 4 of Theme IV of the National Development Strategy envisages that firms will produce high value products and services that can compete in export markets. Therefore, ensuring that high quality goods and services are produced in Trinidad and Tobago is an important prerequisite for increasing the competitiveness of our businesses. To be globally competitive, our goods and services must conform to and surpass international standards.

In this programme, information will also be gathered on the state of readiness for the accreditation of public laboratories and the building of capacity through training in requirements of the appropriate international standards.

Additionally, laboratories' management systems will be developed with policies and procedures to ensure that there is consistency in operations and adherence to international standards. The technical competency of staff of laboratory, validity of test methods, traceability measurements and calibration to national standards, calibration of test equipment and testing equipment will be evaluated. Furthermore, assessing business risks and establishing systems to manage these risks will also be completed.

The benefits resulting from this exercise include but are not limited to:

- greater confidence in the accuracy of measurements and technical capacity of local laboratories
- more reliable data to assist with decision making processes
- greater acceptance of local products and services in the national and export markets, and
- greater promotion of continuous improvement of goods and services

In speaking of accreditation of public laboratories, I must also make mention ladies and gentlemen, of Cabinet's approval in December 2018, for the establishment of the Trinidad and Tobago's Accreditation Service for Conformity Assessment (TTASCA). This project is occurring simultaneously with the programme for the Accreditation of Public Laboratories and will reduce the timeframe for international recognition of public laboratories' testing and calibration services.

TTASCA is an independent national accreditation body to be operationalized for the accreditation of companies and organizations that provide conformity assessment services such as testing, calibration, certification and inspection according to International Standards. Currently, the accreditation of laboratories are completed by the Trinidad and Tobago Laboratory Accreditation Services (TTLABS), a department under the TTBS. However, this accreditation does not allow full international recognition status which is the aim for the establishment of TTASCA. TTASCA will assist with the achievement of international recognition for these companies in conformance with national and international standards. The establishment of TTASCA will also further enhance export competitiveness, economic diversification and the protection of national health and safety with respect to the quality of goods and services offered by Trinidad and Tobago.

Before closing, I wish to mention also the following initiatives under the ambit of the National Quality Policy which will be implemented also:

- A participatory sectorial needs assessment of the priority sectors
- The implementation of a Metrology and Testing Laboratory Capacity Development Plan, and
- The development of a Quality in Public Procurement Programme

As can be seen through these initiatives, the Ministry of Trade and Industry remains committed to aggressively pursuing its mandate of driving the non-energy sector by championing business growth, trade and investment for enhanced global competitiveness and promoting consumer interest for improved safety and well-being.

I urge all stakeholders present today to contribute and make this a successful workshop to actualize this vision for the accreditation for all public laboratories. As has been said, quality is not limited to one individual or organization but requires cooperation among all of us.

I thank you and wish you success in your discussions today.