



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

Inaugural Meeting of the National Quality Council

REMARKS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE SCOON
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

4TH OCTOBER, 2019

SALUTATIONS

- Mr. Norris Herbert, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Chairman of the National Quality Council
- Ms. Frances Seignoret, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry (Ag.)
- Distinguished Members of the National Quality Council
- Staff of the Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Specially invited guests
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

One of the key pillars in doing business is having an efficient and effective National Quality Infrastructure. Our private sector stakeholders have identified quality related issues as a major challenge in expanding trade. The challenges identified point to matters such as poor public laboratory infrastructure, outdated legislation, inadequate enforcement, lack of awareness of standards and high costs of certification and accreditation. Furthermore, our manufacturers continue to face challenges in meeting stringent quality standards abroad while having to compete with poor quality imported products on the local market.

As you are aware, in April 2018, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago approved and launched its National Quality Policy (NQP) which seeks to address several weaknesses and inconsistencies in the current arrangement of the National Quality Infrastructure (NQI). Since then, in implementing the National Quality Policy, several projects have commenced, including, the approval for the Establishment of an Independent Accreditation Body for Conformity Assessment (TTASCA), the development of a national programme for the accreditation of all public laboratories and thirdly the establishment of a National Quality Council.

Today, it gives me great pleasure to open the inaugural meeting of the National Quality Council. I wish to warmly welcome each member of the Council. You are charged with championing the implementation of the National Quality Policy and providing strategic oversight for all National Quality Policy related activities, as well as monitoring and evaluating its progress.

As you are aware, the National Quality Council is the governance arrangement established under the National Quality Policy. It is expected that the National Quality Council will remove the silos that currently exist and allow engagement, collaboration and commitment by all stakeholders including government ministries and agencies, public and private sector representatives, non-governmental

organizations and quality institutions, toward the development of a strong, comprehensive National Quality Infrastructure. As members of the National Quality Council, you accept responsibility for decision making and enhancing the level of quality consciousness and culture required in Trinidad and Tobago.

More specifically, the role of the National Quality Council involves: the coordination of quality promotion activities; prioritization of the areas for funding; the management of a multi-stakeholder approach for accomplishing the policy goals; and the recommendation of appropriate changes in the National Quality Infrastructure.

The recently launched National Trade Policy for Trinidad and Tobago 2019 – 2023, indicated that quality-related or non-tariff barriers continue to grow in importance. The objectives of the National Quality Policy and the governing National Quality Council are directly aligned to addressing these challenges expressed in the National Trade Policy. Therefore, this signifies the importance of the role of this National Quality Council in not only achieving the objectives outlined in the National Quality Policy but also those included in the National Trade Policy aimed at improving competitiveness and economic and export diversification.

As you commence this inaugural meeting of the National Quality Council, I wish you all productive discussions today and at all future sessions. I ask that you remain committed to the successful implementation of our National Quality Policy.

I thank you.