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

"Rebooting For The Digital Age"

PMI Southern Caribbean Chapter

10th Biennial International Conference

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

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REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Salutations

- Mr. Norris Herbert Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Permanent Secretaries of participating ministries
- Senior Government officials
- Representatives of State Agencies
- Project Managers
- Other Specially Invited Guests
- Our valued stakeholders
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

It gives me great pleasure to address you at the opening ceremony of the PMI Southern Caribbean Chapter's 10th Biennial International Project Management Conference themed *"Rebooting for the Digital Age!"* A warm welcome is extended to all participants and in particular those visiting our twin island republic for the first time. Let me take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to participate in today's session which looks at how digital transformation impacts project managers.

The remit of the Ministry of Trade and Industry includes *inter alia* the delivery of services to improve the lives of citizens and more specifically, create an environment where businesses can operate efficiently and compete in the international market place. In order to achieve this objective, it is imperative that we keep in tune with rapid advances in technology, and ensure that technological improvements are integrated into the projects we conceptualise and implement.

As we consider the number of industry-changing technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Internet of things, Blockchain and others, digital transformation is again driving the global market to new business practices. It is to be noted, however, that along with the opportunities for serving our customers better and streamlining our organisations, these emerging digital technologies also introduce unique challenges and new sources of uncertainty. Organizations that succeed in this age of disruption are those that adapt rapidly to new opportunities and challenges. Forward-thinking organizations are therefore required to build better products and create stronger customer relationships with a speed that has not been seen before.

As we commemorate the 10th Biennial International Project Management Conference, we recognise that Digital Transformation requires us to develop and adopt new skills, tools, agile approaches and techniques in order to remain competitive.

As I speak to you today, the Ministry of Trade and Industry is undertaking a number of projects that will provide the impetus for Trinidad and Tobago to take advantage of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. I wish to focus, however, on a key programme—*Strengthening of the Single Electronic Window for Trade and Business Facilitation*. At the heart of this programme is a government wide digital transformation into the way we conduct trade and business in Trinidad and Tobago'. The main objectives of this $25

million USD programme are aimed at improving the country's ease of doing business, enhancing its competitiveness, and instilling a culture of excellence in the public service.

As you may be aware, Trinidad and Tobago's Single Electronic Window, also known as TTBizLink, is a secure IT platform which offers 24/7 access to over 47 trade and business related government e-services. Despite the successful implementation and adoption of this technological advancement further digital transformation is required for Trinidad and Tobago to improve its trade and business performance. These areas include (i) interoperability of information systems used by key logistics stakeholders, as well as international interoperability with our main trading partners (ii) efficient assessment and management of cargo employing cutting edge technology and artificial intelligence to identify risks and (iii) electronic online payments and automation of remaining inefficient paper based systems such as those in the construction permitting process.

One of the most recent technological projects implemented under the SEW programme was the migration of the TTBizLink application to a Cloud-based environment. This initiative provided us with an advanced computing solution which offers improvements in the availability of uptime services, business agility, security and most importantly, reducing capital and operational costs.

One emerging technological development that we believe can fundamentally affect the digital operations of the Single Electronic Window (SEW) is Blockchain technology. There is currently insufficient digital interoperability between stakeholders on the SEW, which restricts agency collaboration among and undermines the whole-of-government approach. Data exchange and data sharing between stakeholders require the development of dozens of point-to-point infrastructure integrations, which utilizes a range of different technologies and business practices that make it technically complex and expensive. Therefore, the implementation of blockchain technology for data exchange on the Single Electronic Window can reduce the cost of implementing whole-of-government data exchanges and allow for greater traceability of goods in supply chains.

Legislation and Institutional Changes
Ladies and Gentlemen, while the SEW programme is focused on implementing some disruptive digital transformation solutions to ensure Trinidad and Tobago's trade and business processes are competitive and aligned to global best practices, these undertakings cannot stand-alone. Underlying these required changes are legislative and institutional reforms. For example, the MTI in collaboration with Ministry of Communications is currently championing the implementation of a robust Data Protection Act, which is geared towards safeguarding our personal and critical business data. We are also developing a new suite of trade and business legislation which will modernise the way we do business in Trinidad and Tobago.

Similarly, institutional arrangements are affected by the deployment of new technology. For example, for the proposed new Port Community System which will facilitate the technological integration of various IT systems at the Ports of entry and the sharing of information amongst the key logistics stakeholders, will require the re-tooling and training of key personnel. The provision of these advancements without the requisite institutional arrangements would be futile. People must be given the tools, training and support so as to effectively utilise new technology. We cannot assume that the new and improved technology by

itself is sufficient. In order to have full execution, provision must be made for institutional support. To quote Steve Jobs *"Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them."*

Communications

We have found that equally important to any digital transformation is communication with our stakeholders as to **WHY**. Why do we undertake to transform the way we do business? Why do we aim to be more efficient and effective in trade and business? Why do we think that new technology provides the solution to improvements in our work environment? While many of you here may be able to provide quick responses to any of these questions, we have found that communicating key messages to stakeholders is as important if not more so than the initiative themselves. In project management this would be referred to as 'stakeholder management' and as you know, this can contribute to a project's success or failure and digital initiatives are no different. Often time technological advancement can be intimidating and threatening in an established environment and while the benefits may seem obvious a communication plan to convey the underlying and overall benefits of the technological advancement is key to the success of the change.

Currently the SEW programme is preparing to implement and launch a new automated construction permitting system which will digitize the construction permit process reducing the procedures, time and effort spent in obtaining regulatory approvals from over 15 government agencies. This transformation involves various stakeholders including regulatory bodies, civil society organizations, government agencies and the private sector collaborating on a single digital platform which will be launched later this month in the City of Port of Spain on a pilot basis, and therefore after nationwide. To date, the Project Implement Unit has coordinated over 125 sessions with stakeholders to ensure project success.

Conclusion

'Rebooting' requires consistent updates to ensure that we maintain functionality and relevance; as we live in a world that is heavily dependent upon technology which transforms the way we do business which ultimately impacts our existing trade and business environment. Apart from adapting to the change associated with digital transformation, it is essential for us as a society to change and innovate consistently and sustainably while understanding that this change is as much about the people involved than it is the technology.

Not only is global business being impacted by technological disruption, but so are the roles of those engaged in project management. In this new digital age, project managers continue to need a thorough combination of NEW technical and project management skills, NEW leadership skills, and NEW strategic and business management skills. In addition to these skills, we know that organizations need project leaders with an ability to learn and keep pace with technology. I therefore encourage you to take part in the next two full days of knowledge exchanges and go back to your organisations and make a difference.