



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

*ExporTT's Graduation
Ceremony International
Trade Specialists (ITS)
Programme*

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ADDRESS

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

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7TH FEBRUARY, 2020

Salutations

- Mr Ashmeer Mohamed, Chairman of exporTT
- Mr Dietrich Guichard, Chief Executive Officer exporTT
- Representative exporTT
- Graduates
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening,

It is a pleasure to deliver remarks at the fourth graduation ceremony of the International Trade Specialist Programme.

Sincere appreciation is extended to exporTT for continuing this initiative which has produced eighty seven graduates to date. This programme dovetails with the Ministry's efforts to build globally competitive businesses, with particular emphasis on capacity building.

It is important that our exporters be supported with trained experts to help navigate the complex business environment. Programmes such as these are therefore vital to ensuring that there is a cadre of trade experts from which to draw from.

Today, we welcome twenty six certified International Trade Specialists. The knowledge and skills you have received will be in high demand in Trinidad and Tobago and throughout the Region. I am certain that the training received has provided each individual with the requisite knowledge and skills and I encourage you to utilise this new knowledge to the best of your ability.

As trade specialists you would appreciate that we exist in a globalised world where change is both inevitable and constant. Survival therefore in such a dynamic environment requires both the willingness to adapt and the foresight to anticipate change. Understanding the market and customers, leveraging the advantages of technology, innovation and strategic thinking are of major importance.

The success of the country's exporters is inextricably linked to Trinidad and Tobago's economic progress. They are an engine of growth, creating well-paying jobs, contributing to poverty reduction and providing revenue for essential services which at times is taken for granted.

The Government understands that sustainable and inclusive private sector-led growth does not occur on its own. Support and encouragement by the state is a requirement.

Over the last five years, the Government has been working assiduously to build the resilient and diversified economy necessary to bolster your prosperity. Allow me to detail some of the initiatives being pursued by the Ministry of Trade and Industry to lend support to our exporters:

- The implementation of Trinidad and Tobago National Trade Policy. It contains several policy measures to support trade including strengthening our trade related institutional and human resource capacity, increasing the utilisation of our trade agreements, and an improvement of the business environment. All of which will support increased market access and penetration of our exports.
- The development of mechanisms to support the growth of the manufacturing sector with the Manufacturing Policy. Contained in this policy are measures for the transformation of the sector into one that is globally competitive, productive and innovative. This effort shows the Government understands the importance of the sector given its significant contribution to our GDP and employment.
- Additionally, the National Quality Policy is also being implemented. This is designed to help our exporters meet international quality standards and facilitate a stronger and sustained presence of Trinidad and Tobago products in global markets.
- Addressing e-commerce with the National E-commerce Strategy. This strategy contains measures which will create the enabling environment necessary to promote e-commerce for locals to serve domestic and international consumer markets.
- The potential of the services sector will be actualised with the development of the National Services Policy which is currently being finalised. It will address the needs of the sector and see improvements in the access to finance and reliable market information and the administration of a comprehensive incentive framework among other things.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry also has several incentives to fuel growth among SMEs and MSMEs. One such incentive is the Grant Funding Facility. This facility provides access of up to TT\$250,000.00 to cover the cost of new capital including new machinery, equipment, technology or software.

The Research and Development Facility (RDF) administered by exporTT provides funding of up to TT \$1million to support the product development, marketing and commercialisation of innovative goods and services. Success stories have emanated from several RDF beneficiaries and the Ministry of Trade and Industry will continue to support this initiative.

To positively impact the ease of doing business, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, is coordinating with several ministries and government agencies the implementation of a robust package of administrative and legislative reforms.

- To improve the interoperability of TTBizLink - the Government's online trade platform - with all other trade-related agencies, the MTI is receiving technical assistance from the Inter-American Development Bank. This aid will facilitate the seamless exchange of data between TTBizLink and key stakeholders such as the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, the Customs and Excise

Division, the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, the Ministry of Health, as well Trinidad and Tobago's trading partners reducing the processing times of several documents required for trade.

- The Ministry of Trade and Industry also with technical assistance from the Inter-American Development Bank, is collaborating with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Public Administration on the implementation of an Electronic Funds Transfer system to allow the Government to make and receive electronic payments that would provide a safe and secure environment for consumers to transact business with Government agencies among other things.
- Additionally, an Automated System for Construction Permits will be launched shortly to reduce the administrative burden associated with this process.

Ladies and gentlemen several other opportunities exist. As you may be aware, Trinidad and Tobago is also party to several trade agreements which allows preferential access for our products in several markets across CARICOM, Latin America and Europe. Together these markets provide access to almost 500 million potential customers.

Additionally, the Ministry of Trade and Industry will soon be commencing trade negotiations with Chile and are in discussions with Curaçao for a possible agreement. All this is in the attempt to improve market access for exporters.

You are urged to make use of these trade agreements and seek the assistance of exporTT in this regard. exporTT has also been actively pursuing a coordinated Trade Mission Programme to allow our exporters and service providers to take greater advantage of the opportunities in our traditional markets and to penetrate new markets.

For 2020, exporTT has trade missions planned to Panama, Chile and Atlanta. You are encouraged to get involved early and make contact with exporTT as previous Trade Missions have yielded positive results for our exporters.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Government is listening to your concerns. Opportunities for success abound. Local businesses can compete with the world and therefore competition should never be a deterrent, in fact it should encourage you to do better. As advances are made in your respective organisations, you are reminded that the Government will continue to do what is necessary to assist.

In closing, I wish to again congratulate you on taking the initiative to complete this programme. The responsibility ultimately falls on you to apply what you have learnt in a meaningful way. Continue to avail yourself of the other capacity building opportunities available and I have full confidence that you will all be successful.

I thank you.