



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade and Industry

***Resilience in the face of
a Global Pandemic –
Contribution to the 2022 Fiscal
Appropriation Bill***

Senate

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

OCTOBER 18TH, 2021

SMEs AND THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM – This is where I left off

- Madam President, it is with great pleasure that I address Trinidad and Tobago's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem.
- But firstly, I must once again give credit to the Minister of Finance for the range of commercial incentives introduced in this Budget for Business.
- If Trinidad and Tobago is to fully recover, then our entrepreneurs and business firms must play an important role in the recovery process. This will require that start-ups and existing businesses are afforded the necessary tools and resources to enable them to innovate, adapt and grow, at each stage of the development process.
- Firms with varying sizes and levels of maturity have unique challenges and needs. Even similar firms that operate in different sectors encounter varied constraints, both internal and external. It is therefore necessary that policies and programmes are tailored as much as possible, to meet their financial and non-financial needs such as:
 - **Access to Finance**
 - **Capacity Building**
 - **Market Access**
- The Government recognizes that for any entrepreneurial ecosystem to be robust and to serve as a foundation for innovative, dynamic, competitive firms, public policy must address the stages of the business development process holistically and completely, since each firm, entrepreneur and management team has its own unique challenges and constraints.
- Recognizing this, the Government, academia (universities) and corporations like the Unit Trust are working to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Madam President, this holistic approach has a number of actors supporting and playing an instrumental role in the growth of businesses with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago at the helm.

ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

1. START-UPS (< 1 YEAR)

- a) Research and Development Facility (RDF) – exporTT
- b) Innovation Envelope – Export Booster Initiative (Manufacturing)
- c) Business Incubators
 - CARIRI
 - UWI Ventures
 - Innovation Incubator Project (Manufacturing)
- d) Tax Incentives (for Start-ups) (Ministry of Finance)

2. EARLY-STAGE FIRMS (1-5 YEARS)

- a) NEDCO Grant
- b) SME Capacity Building Enhancements – newly announced \$50 million fund under the Ministry of Finance
- c) Scale up Trinidad and Tobago – to be introduced by the MTI and UTC
- d) Credit Union Soft Loans - \$100 million
- e) Junior Stock Exchange – incentivized and mentorship programme
- f) Grant Fund Facility
- g) e-Commerce
- h) She Trades Hub – female entrepreneurs
- i) Steelpan Manufacturing Grant Fund Facility – now further extended

3. MATURE FIRMS (> 6 YEARS)

- a) Expansion of Government-Guaranteed Loan Programme
- b) Research and Development Capital Allowance
- c) VAT Refunds – to be accelerated via cash and bonds
- d) Export Booster Initiative¹
- e) National Quality Infrastructure
- f) EximBank Forex Facility
- g) Corporate Tax reduction for Significant Exporters
- h) New Manufacturing Sector Allowance

¹ Just mention

START-UPS

- Start-ups have very special needs and require specific interventions. Advisory services to help them make the right decisions, target realistic expectations, and advance them from the idea stage, include:



a) **Research and Development Facility (RDF)**

- ExportTT's grant funding allows entrepreneurs and firms to move from the idea stage to product development, then to commercialization. Firms and individuals can access up to a total of TT\$1,000,000 for the various stages.

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b) **Innovation Envelope (under the Export Booster Initiative)**

- To drive and promote more research and development and innovation at the firm level, \$3.82 million will be allocated to provide Innovation Vouchers of up to \$200,000 or new lines of credit to help existing and new exporters foster and develop linkages with public and private sector knowledge providers including universities and public and private research.
- Again – the promotion of research and development and innovation.
- Eligible activities to be covered include Process Automation, Product/Service Development and Acquisition of Technology including mobile applications and 3D printing.
- Twenty (20) companies are expected to benefit from this facility resulting in more competitive exporters as a consequence of having developed more innovative exports and/or adopted more efficient production practices and processes.

c) **Business Incubators**

a) **CARIRI**

The Caribbean Industrial Research Institute provides modern laboratories with state-of-the-art equipment, together with specialist programmes, providing services to the micro-entrepreneur and the macro-industrialist, and attending to their testing, R&D and innovation needs.

b) **UWI Ventures**

UWI Ventures, a UWI holding company, supports and accelerates innovation and entrepreneurship. It serves as a modern business incubator through which entrepreneurs can submit ideas and innovations, and advance them through coaching, training, networking and mentorship.

c) **Innovation Incubator Project – for the manufacturing sector**

Government will now establish an Innovation Incubator Project in collaboration with the University of the West Indies (UWI), again providing greater support for entrepreneurship in varying sectors.

d) **Tax Incentives (for Start-ups)**

- The Government will continue to promote start-ups and entrepreneurship in the Information Technology, Digitization and Construction sectors through a reduction in corporation tax rate by 5% for applicable firms.
- Additionally, new SMEs whose core business activities are related to digitization and technology solutions will be granted a 50% tax exemption on the first TT\$100,000 of chargeable income for the first year and the first TT\$200,000 of chargeable income for the second year. The new tax incentive commences on January 1, 2022 will be reviewed after three years.

EARLY-STAGE FIRMS

a) NEDCO Grant Facility

- During COVID-19, TT\$30 million was allocated to the NEDCO Grant Facility for micro enterprises that generate less than TT\$1 million in annual revenues. The Facility allocates a maximum of TT\$20,000 to registered business owners to be used to assist firms to manage and operate post COVID-19. This is grant funding, which will be extended into 2022. NEDCO's entrepreneurial funding and training remain available to entrepreneurs.

b) SME Capacity Building and Training

- The Government will allocate **TT\$50 Mn** to introduce enhancement programmes targeted to building SME competency in the areas of accounting, recording keeping, training, management, inventory control and health and safety so that businesses are enabled to meet their statutory obligations. This programme will be managed by the Ministry of Finance.
- The Government is aware of the needs of the range of actors in the private sector, as well as individuals who wish to innovate and bring new products and services to market, and is building on its existing programme of policies and initiatives. Given the current international economic climate, we expect more and more entrepreneurs and firms to work with the Government and take advantage of the numerous opportunities in achieving increased stability and growth.

c) Scale Up Trinidad and Tobago

- Government is partnering with the Unit Trust Corporation (UTC) and will launch and implement the Scale UpTT Programme. Scale Up is an internationally recognized business accelerator programme aimed at increasing growth rates of medium-sized enterprises, by enhancing their entrepreneurial know-how and improving their technical and managerial competence.
- This Programme entails innovative methods tailored to develop:
 - the entrepreneurial mindset;
 - business experience;
 - customer base; and
 - improve operational skills to drive real economic growth.

- In April 2021, the Unit Trust Corporation launched Cohort 1 of Scale Up TT with similar success. Cohort 1 comprised eleven (11) firms from the Manufacturing, Agro-processing, Information Communications Technology and Services sectors. Upon conclusion, participating firms reported:
 - between 25 to 75% growth in revenues;
 - between 25 to 80% growth in exports and expansion into new export destinations;
 - One SME experienced 50% growth in online sales within three (3) months; and
 - the creation of 13 new jobs across the sectors.
- To sustain and replicate the success achieved in Cohort 1, the Government, in collaboration with UTC, will continue the implementation of Scale Up TT during Fiscal 2022. – 2 Cohorts

d) ***Credit Unions ‘Soft’ Loans***

- The Government has also provided **TT\$100 million** to the Credit Union Movement to allow them to provide ‘soft’ loans (low interest and long maturity loans) to existing and new members.

e) ***Junior Stock Exchange***

- Madam President, during the initial stages of business, SMEs generally depend on internal funds and commercial banks to finance investments, and this Government is well aware of the inherent challenges. However, due to conservative lending practices of commercial banks, many SMEs do not meet the requirements to qualify for additional lines of credit or further financing.
- Therefore, this government is pursuing new and innovative avenues to increase sources of finance available to SMEs through the Junior Stock Exchange Market.
- The Junior Stock Exchange Market is designed to encourage public investment in SMEs and promote entrepreneurship, employment and economic development.
- New SME listings on the TTSE will enjoy a full-tax holiday for the first 5-year period and receive tax exemptions on Business Levy and Green Fund Levy.
- For the second 5-year period, new SME listings will be taxed at a rate of fifty percent 50% on applicable taxes (Corporation Tax, Business Levy and Green Fund Levy).
- The TTSE in collaboration with Joint Chamber bodies will also operationalize an SME Mentorship Programme.
- An approved mentor will be appointed to SMEs listed on the Junior Stock Market. The mentor will have a continuous presence and will act as a compliance advisor to the company. Specifically, the mentor will be responsible for advising the company on the establishment of adequate procedures, systems, and controls related to compliance requirements.
- This new Mentorship Programme will provide SMEs with the guidance required to successfully transition and grow its business whilst practicing good corporate Governance.

- Madam President, allow me to use this opportunity to call on all leaders in the business community to volunteer and lend their expertise to this mentorship programme.

f) **Grant Fund Facility**

- Since the establishment of the Grant Fund Facility in November 2017, **twenty-one (21) SMEs have been approved with an accumulated disbursement of TT\$3,890,233.83.**
- Even during the Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020 to September 2021), **twelve (12) companies have benefitted with a total disbursement of TT\$2,354,569.76.**
- The Facility has provided these companies with financing which improved their productivity and competitiveness, created product diversification into more innovative and high-value products, increased production, created synergies along the local supply chain and allowed for penetration of new markets.
- **55 new jobs were created**, with further employment expected to be created upon completion of several of the projects in progress.
- The funding has also enabled several of the beneficiaries to penetrate new export markets, including CARICOM countries, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. **Upon completion, some of these projects are expected to facilitate further exports to non-traditional markets such as Slovakia, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Germany, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica and Chile.**

g) **E-commerce**

- In Fiscal 2021, the MTI hosted three (3) E-commerce webinars for businesses in key areas including:
 - *Financing and other Opportunities for MSMEs for Digital Transformation*
 - *Digital Opportunities for MSME's: Pivot your Business to the Next Level;* and
 - *Digital Payments Solutions for MSMEs.*
 - *We will continue with similar initiatives.*

h) **National SheTrades Hub**

- The SheTrades Initiative is a collaborative effort between the Government and the International Trade Centre (ITC) that seeks to promote and empower female entrepreneurs in the country. The SheTrades Initiative seeks to bring one hundred thousand (100,000) females globally to the international market by 2021. Our local hub is one of 25 Hubs worldwide and offers training, expert advice, mentoring and invaluable networking opportunities to the four hundred and seventy-four (474) women owned businesses registered on the platform.
- In its first year, T&T's SheTrades has already garnered success for our female owned SMEs (for example See Newsday's article on Thursday 30th September 2021, "*How the SheTrades Hub helped a woman-led business highlighted the experience as a member of the Hub*").
- This year, the T&T Hub was revamped, to better align it, to meet the needs of locally registered businesses. Currently, exporTT is coordinating the attendance of ten (10)

female owned businesses from Trinidad and Tobago to exhibit virtually at SheTrades Global Dubai.

- SheTrades Global is the ITC’s premier annual event and is being co-organized with Dubai Industries & Exports and EXPO 2020 Dubai. At this event, female entrepreneurs from Trinidad and Tobago will join over three thousand (3,000) women-led SMEs from around the world to participate in clinics and master classes facilitated by experts.

*i) **Steelman Manufacturing Grant Fund Facility***

- The Steelpan Manufacturing Grant Fund Facility was launched in January 2020 to provide funding to eligible firms for the acquisition of new machinery and equipment, software, tools, raw materials and training by local steelpan manufacturers. Funds are disbursed in tranches up to TT\$250,000.00, but not exceeding a total of TT\$1,000,000.00 per entity. Additionally, grant recipients agree to provide training and apprenticeships to graduates from educational institutions.
- In Fiscal 2021, eight (8) steelpan manufacturers were approved to receive funding from the SMGFF. Since its launch total disbursements were estimated at **TT\$2.1 Mn.**

Steelman Manufacturer	Amount
Pan Crafters	\$109,136.79
Perfect Steel	\$131,854.10
Noel’s Steelpan Productions	\$ 38,423.64
Innovative Steelpan Instruments Services	\$158,027.85
RS Sweet Pans Ltd	\$ 52,310.69
Codrington Family Institute	\$ 83,199.85
Panland Trinidad and Tobago	\$986,200.00
Harrigin Instruments	\$605,780.00

- The projected export destinations of the products produced by these eight (8) SMGFF recipients include regional markets such as **Barbados, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Jamaica, Cuba, Belize, St. Thomas and the US Virgin Islands and international markets such as the USA, the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Japan, China, Germany and Australia.**
- Given the success of the SMGFF and understanding the value chain of the industry, an additional TTD\$2 Mn has been allocated to the Facility.

ALL FIRMS

- Mature firms have well-established networks and relationships which give them an advantage; however, because of the significant costs aligned with their growth and desire to pivot into new goods and services or markets, the Government has a number of financial support measures including:

*a) **Expansion of Government Guaranteed Loan Programme***

- In September 2021, the Government revised the Guaranteed Loan Programme for Small and Medium Enterprises. Phase 2 of the Facility will be recapitalized to the amount of

TTD\$196 million and the Government's guarantee has been extended to cover 100% of the loan amount.

- The requirements have been amended:
 - SMEs with an annual revenue of TTD\$500,000 to TTD\$25 Mn now have access to the facility.
 - The loan repayment period has been expanded from five (5)- seven (7) years, inclusive of a 24-month moratorium on the principal from date of disbursement.
 - The loan will cover the purchase of fixed assets, but not residential property, goods and vehicles for use by the business.
- Additionally, the Government has relaxed the eligibility requirement that SMEs must be up to date with BIR and NIB payments. Now SMEs will now only be required to be up to date to **December 2018**. This will allow significantly more SMEs to meet the eligibility criteria.

*b) **Research and Development (R&D) Capital Allowance***

- The Government is proposing tax incentives to reduce the risk borne by firms and to encourage increased reinvestment in research and innovation. These include proposals for a **Research and Development (R&D) Capital Allowance** of up to 40 percent of expenditure (in calculating taxable profits) incurred by companies engaged in Research and Development.

*c) **VAT Refunds***

- The Government will ensure that VAT refunds are expedited and continue to disburse outstanding VAT Bonds in the upcoming Fiscal year.

*d) **Export Booster Initiative and National Quality Infrastructure***

- ExportTT's Export Booster Initiative and the TTBS's Quality Agenda will serve to ensure that our firms are competitive and ready to face the world.

*e) **Exim Bank Forex Facility***

- In Fiscal 2022, the Government will recapitalize the EXIMBANK to ensure the needs of Manufacturing Sector are continued to be met. In addition, a new "Catalytic Fund" at the EximBank where export-oriented companies, in both the manufacturing and service sectors, will be able to access financial support to generate increased exports and earn more foreign exchange.
- In 2020, **97 manufacturing** businesses had accessed an estimated **US\$100Mn from the Forex Facility**; while another **US\$81.2 Mn** was disbursed to **107** businesses for the period January – August 2021.

*f) **Corporation Tax reduction for Significant Exporters***

- Reduction of the Corporation tax rate by 5.0 percent for significant exporters of Local Goods with an annual revenue of over \$500,000. This measure is estimated to benefit over five hundred exporters in the initial assessment and is estimated to cost \$45.3 million annually in

revenue forgone. This measure will take effect on January 1 2022 and will be reviewed after 3 years.

g) Manufacturing Sector Tax Allowance

- The Government will introduce a new tax incentive to promote technological and digitization advancements and drive foreign direct investment in the non-energy manufacturing sector. **There is to be a 5% reduction in the rate of tax to 25% and is limited to TT\$500,000** on qualifying expenditure in projects which create advancements and growth in the manufacturing sector. Further, these projects must be related to information technology and digitization, manufacturing and technology development. This incentive will be for 2 years.
- The Government is aware of the needs of the range of actors in the private sector, as well as individuals who wish to innovate and bring new products and services to market, and is therefore building on its existing programme of policies and initiatives. Given the current international economic climate, we expect more and more entrepreneurs and firms to work with us and take advantage of the numerous opportunities in achieving increased stability and growth.
- There are a myriad of incentives and programmes under the Ministries of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries; Tourism, Culture and the Arts; and Digital Transformation, as this Government successfully advances the Diversification Agenda in line with its Roadmap of transforming to a new economy.

IMPROVING COMPETITIVENESS

- Under this Government, the MTI has redoubled its efforts in **accelerating the economic recovery of our nation**, via implementation and in some cases spearheading initiatives highlighted by the Roadmap to Recovery Committee, as postulated in the Phase Two Report of the Roadmap to Recovery for Trinidad and Tobago.
- The MTI's focus in growing the Manufacturing Sector is on: -
 - **DEEPENING AND EXPANDING TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S TRADING RELATIONSHIP BY IMPROVING MARKET ACCESS WITH EXISTING AND NEW TRADING PARTNERS;**
 - **IMPLEMENTING THE EXPORT BOOSTER INITIATIVE (EBI);**
 - **PROMOTING ECONOMIC INTEGRATION;**
 - **ENHANCING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR BY IMPROVING OUR NATIONAL QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE;**
 - **COMBATTING ILLICIT TRADE;**
 - **ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW TRADE AND INVESTMENT PROMOTION AGENCY (TIPA);**
 - **SEZ INITIATIVE; AND**
 - **APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME FOR NON-ENERGY MANUFACTURING SECTOR.**
- Madam President, in my Contribution to the debate in the other place, I would have elaborated on a series of these initiatives, therefore, today, I will speak to those briefly and elaborate further on others.

A. DEEPENING AND EXPANDING TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S TRADING RELATIONSHIP

- Great focus is being placed on expanding market access to targeted countries and markets of interest. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago is signatory to a series of trade agreements that provide market access opportunities for our local goods and services. Some of these agreements include: -
 - *CARICOM*
 - *Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI)*;
 - *CARIFORUM-UK Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)*;
 - *Trinidad and Tobago – Chile Partial Scope Trade Agreement (PSTA)*;
 - *CARICOM–Colombia Trade Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement*;
 - *Trinidad and Tobago – Panama Partial Scope Trade Agreement (PSTA)*; and
 - *CARICOM–Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (FTA)*.
- Madam President, we have managed to see the direct results of the implementation of these key initiatives converting to exports in fiscal 2021. Participants in various trade missions have started exporting a wide range of products from various sectors such as printing and packaging; food and beverage; agricultural products, personal products and chemicals to new export markets within the CARICOM region such as St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Barbados, Belize and Guyana and extra-regional markets including the United States, Puerto Rico, Canada, Cyprus and St. Marteen.

CARICOM Trade

- The CARICOM region continues to be a significant export destination for our products valued approximately on average **TT\$8.0 Bn** per year. *(N.B. Calculated using data sourced from ROE 2021 for the years 2016 to 2020).*
- According to the Review of the Economy 2021, Trinidad and Tobago recorded an increase of approximately 33.5% in the surplus on its Balance of Trade with CARICOM countries during the period Oct 2020 to June 2021, which moved to **TT\$5.76 Bn** from **TT\$4.3 Bn** in the corresponding 2020 period (Oct 2019 to June 2020).
- However, exports to the CARICOM region remains lower than pre-COVID levels (*e.g. total exports valued TT\$7.9 Bn in 2019*) this is mainly attributable to the slowdown in economic activity in tourism based economies in the region.

Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI)

- In October 2020 the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) between the Caribbean and the United States was **renewed**.
- The US is our largest trading partner and for the 2021 period, Trinidad and Tobago recorded a trade surplus with the US of **TT\$1.9 Billion**. The main exports during the

period included **ferrous products from iron ore reduction, anhydrous ammonia, methanol and urea and food and beverages.**

- I am pleased to note that Trinidad and Tobago **exports to the United States have become more diversified.**

CARIFORUM-UK Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

- The CARIFORUM-United Kingdom (UK) Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) was signed in April 2019 and the Act to give effect to the Agreement domestically was proclaimed by the President of Trinidad and Tobago on March 31, 2021.
- The benefits of signing this Agreement include providing continued predictable market access for Trinidad and Tobago's products and services, **including a special protocol for creative and entertainment industries, which ensures duty-free-quota-free market access into the UK market.**

Trinidad and Tobago – Chile Partial Scope Trade Agreement (PSTA)

- On October 20, 2020, Trinidad and Tobago and Chile signed a General Framework Agreement for the negotiation of a PSTA.
- The First Round of negotiations occurred during the period 17-19 August 2021.
- The Second Round of negotiation is tentatively scheduled for December 2021 and Negotiating Groups will meet intersessionally in November 2021.
- The exchange of information on trade and tariff data will be exchanged prior to the Second Round and will assist both sides in determining the list of products to be covered by the Agreement. This exercise will of course be undertaken with input by the private sector (recognising sensitive sectors) and an approval by the Cabinet.

CARICOM–Colombia Trade Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement

- With regard to the CARICOM-Colombia Trade Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement, **initial negotiations for the expansion of preferential market access** between the CARICOM and Colombia have commenced.
- Both parties have exchanged request lists and National consultations with Ministries, Agencies and Private Sector are on-going to determine TT Positions on the type of access that can be offered.
- The negotiation process is expected to be completed by the end of Fiscal 2022.

Trinidad and Tobago – Panama Partial Scope Trade Agreement (PSTA)

- The **First Meeting of the Joint Administration Commission** for the Trinidad and Tobago – Panama Partial Scope Trade Agreement (PSTA) was held on April 16, 2021 with both Ministers of Trade present.
- Trinidad and Tobago is taking action to establish working groups to commence negotiations for expansion of preferential access for goods and the development of

Unified Rules of Origin. This will result in increased export opportunities for our manufacturers and exporters.

CARICOM–Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

- The Dominican Republic is an important trading partner for Trinidad and Tobago, both as part of the regional bloc CARIFORUM and under the CARICOM-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement.
- Trinidad and Tobago has been a net exporter to the Dominican Republic over the period 2016-2020. In 2020, Trinidad and Tobago exported products valued at approximately **TT\$311 million**.
- Both Trinidad and Tobago and the DR will continue to work together to utilize our market space and to explore and capitalize on the complementarity and synergies that exist between both countries.

Export Opportunities to China

- Trinidad and Tobago, through its trade promotion agency, exporTT will participate at the 4th China International Import Exposition (CIIE) in Shanghai, China in November 2021, with an objective to increase and diversify exports to China.
- The CIIE is one of the world's largest platforms for strengthening international cooperation in trade and investment and comprises of three (3) components:
 1. An Online Country Exhibition,
 2. An Enterprise and Business Exhibition and, (which is a physical event)
 3. The 10th China International Oil and Gas Trade Congress (which is a physical event).
- Some of the firms participating at CIIE are Angostura Limited, Vemco, Hadco, Freshstart, KC Confectionery, TT Fine Cocoa, The Chocolate Box, Twigs Natural, Chief Brand Products, CGA Limited and RHS Marketing.
- Some of the products expected to be on display include natural teas, natural coconut oils, rum, curry powder, cocoa, chocolate, seasonings, pepper sauce and aromatic bitters.

Export Opportunities to Europe

- The Ministry of Trade and Industry through exporTT will implement the Second Fit 4 Europe Project in fiscal 2022 to develop the export readiness of the manufacturing and services sectors for the EU market.
- The First Fit 4 Europe Project successfully built the capacity of twenty-six (26) Trinidad and Tobago enterprises at varying levels of development, comprising, micro and rural based firms, women led businesses, established exporters and business development organisations. The project delivered US\$18 Million "Reported Export Orders", in addition to ten companies being in the advanced stages of distributive of partnership agreements.
- The FIT 4 Europe II project will continue the implementation of the CARIFORUM–EU EPA and ensure that exporters are able to benefit from the opportunities under the CARIFORUM –EU EPA.

- The project will focus on the development of manufacturers under the following key sectors food and beverage, agro processing, chemicals, services, fashion, animation and culture.

B. IMPLEMENTATION OF EXPORT BOOSTER INITIATIVE (EBI)

- With respect to pursuing the GORTT's diversification agenda, the MTI in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) and exportTT developed an Export Booster Initiative (EBI). This flagship programme, was in keeping with an allocation of TT\$50 Mn allocated by Government to MTI in the Fiscal 2020/2021 Budget for overseas market development and export promotion.
- **TT\$37.8 Mn** has been allocated in Fiscal 2022 for the EBI.
- In line with the TTMA's Manufacturing Export Strategy objective of doubling manufacturing exports by 2025, the objective of the EBI is to increase the value of select manufactured goods **from TT\$2.7 billion in 2019 to TT\$5.4 billion** by 2024. To achieve this target, the EBI will focus on sixteen initiatives under three broad strategic areas namely Export Promotion, Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening.

Export Promotion

- For the purpose of Export Promotion, funding will be allocated to cover several initiatives. These initiatives include: -
 - I. The Conduct of Virtual Trade Missions;
 - II. The Strengthening of Market Intelligence;
 - III. The Provision of translation and interpretation of support services;
 - IV. The Strengthening of In-market support services;
 - V. The Establishment of a Virtual Expo Platform;
 - VI. The Development of Sector Profiles or Marketing Materials to promote the country's exports and;
 - VII. The establishment of a Trade Facilitation Office and Trade Attaches, which will be discussed later on.

Capacity Building

- Madam President, I will now speak to Capacity Building, which under the EBI speaks to increasing the capacity or competitiveness of local manufacturers to produce products that are price and quality competitive, six initiatives under Capacity Building have been allocated **\$32.62 million**. These include:
 - i) International Certification Fund Programme to help exporters meet International Standards;
 - ii) Provision of Innovation Vouchers to encourage Product Development;
 - iii) The Provision of Labelling and Product Testing Support;
 - iv) Establishment of a Tobago Capacity Building Programme;
 - v) Establishment of an Export Accelerator Programme; and
 - vi) Provision of Support for Green Packaging and Manufacturing.
- During fiscal 2021, implementation commenced on the International Certification Fund while commencement of other initiatives are at different stages of implementation.

- Proposals are currently being considered for the implementation of Innovation Vouchers to encourage product development; the provision of support to companies to transition into using and manufacturing Green Packaging materials; and the rollout of a Tobago Capacity Building Programme.

The International Certification Fund (ICF)

- Madam President, TT\$20M was allocated to the ICF to help exporters achieve international certification in food/beverage and other product compliance to meet the quality and safety standards of international markets and franchises as well as promote import substitution.
- To date four (6) applications have been approved and seven (7) are being processed. These applicants represent firms in the agro- processing sector, food and beverage engineering and industrial sectors and construction.
- This certification will allow companies to enter new markets such as Belize, Costa Rica, Colombia, Panama, Haiti and Turks and Caicos
- The six beneficiaries thus far have estimated that this certification will realise significant foreign exchange earnings in an estimated sum of **US\$ 2.8 million annually**.
- In the case of one of the companies, **import substitution** will result in **saving this country approximately US\$700,000 annually** in foreign exchange.
- To secure as many suitable applicants as possible for the ICF programme, exporTT has targeted firms from a list of over 110 of Trinidad and Tobago's top exporters earning between USD100,000 and USD 4 Million in export revenue.
- Based on this list, exporTT has been directly communicating with firms encouraging them to apply, as well as, providing assistance with the application process. exporTT is also working closely with the TTMA and their External Trade Consultant to identify exporting firms who can benefit from the ICF.
- Madam President, this certification programmes has been a resounding success to date!
- Thus far, more than 28 companies, have expressed interest in the programme. It is anticipated that for fiscal 2022 approximately 40 more applications will be received for support under the ICF programme.

C. ENHANCING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR - TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ACCREDITATION SERVICE FOR CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT (TTASCA)

- In order to enhance the competitiveness of the private sector the Government, through the Ministry of Trade and Industry and its state agencies, is currently pursuing two (2) key projects:

- *Establishing an Independent Accreditation Body for the Manufacturing Sector (TTASCA); and*
- *Implementing the National Quality Policy (NQP).*
- Legislation to establish TTASCA will be completed by December 2021 to allow local labs (including those involved in food, medical and product testing) to be accredited. A training facilitator has been procured and the training component for staff and assessor transitioning from TTLABS to TTASCA commenced in July 2021.
- A key part of implementing the NQP is the accreditation of public laboratories, thus far 2 (two) local laboratories, the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) and National Petroleum (NP) have undergone preparation and accreditation assessment.
- Since then, the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) has made a call for assessment of additional laboratories, with two more expected to join the list of accredited labs.
- Work on the NQP and NQI is ongoing and the Government's commitment to building the National Quality Infrastructure is evident in the allocation of **TT\$9.35 Mn** in Fiscal 2021.
- In addition to this, a Grant in the amount of EU198,000 was received from the European Union for the Project - Building a Quality Culture in Trinidad and Tobago. This Project was launched on October 1, 2021.

D. NATIONAL ACTION PLAN TO COMBAT ILLICIT TRADE IN CONSUMER GOODS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

- A National Action Plan to Combat Illicit Trade in Consumer Goods in Trinidad and Tobago was approved by Cabinet in March 2021.
- The Action Plan includes twenty-six (26) measures aimed at achieving the following general objectives:
 - (1) Strengthen the legal framework to combat illicit trade;
 - (2) Strengthen the capacity of Ministries and enforcement agencies to combat illicit trade;
 - (3) Enhance collaboration among regulatory and enforcement agencies;
 - (4) Promote public-private partnerships towards fighting illicit trade; and
 - (5) Increase public awareness of illicit trade and the associated dangers.

Establishment of the Anti-Illicit Trade Task Force (AITTF)

- The Anti-Illicit Trade Task Force (AITTF) co-chaired by the Permanent Secretaries of the MTI and MNS is responsible for implementation of the Action Plan.
- Thus far they have approved the establishment of:
 - A sectoral sub-working group on legislation that will spearhead strengthening of the legal framework to combat illicit trade and review any legislative related matters to address illicit trade.
 - Working Groups on alcohol, tobacco, cleaning agents and pharmaceuticals to further assess the impact on these sectors and provide sector-specific recommendations.

The Anti-Illicit Trade Awareness Campaign

- Currently, work is also on-going on the development of a National Awareness Campaign. In October 2021, the MTI will lead efforts to establish Memoranda of Understanding among member organizations of the AITTF to strengthen interagency cooperation and coordination to address illicit trade.
- We are already seeing the effects of increased enforcement by the Multi-Agency Task Force, as several illicit items including tobacco, and alcoholic beverages were recently seized in an anti-crime exercise campaign.

E. The Establishment of a Trade and Investment Promotion Agency for Trinidad and Tobago

- The establishment of a TIPA is but another institutional effort to improve competitiveness, exports and investments.
- TIPA is aimed at transforming and increasing the competitiveness of the trade and business environment of Trinidad and Tobago.
- Its establishment is intended to strengthen and modernize the country's export and investment promotion institutional arrangements to be more high profiled and on par with other similar regional and international agencies.
- The TIPA will be the country's premier trade and investment promotion agency, staffed with highly skilled and reputable officers who are ably equipped to represent the country's strategic interests at the highest levels.
- By having a single export and investment promoting champion, the proposed TIPA will simplify doing business with Trinidad and Tobago creating one interface for the domestic private sector and making it easier for the country's trading partners to trade and invest.
- It is proposed that the TIPA will establish Trade Facilitation/Commercial Offices and where necessary, Commercial Officers with responsibility for Trade and Investment Promotion will be located within T&T Embassies and Missions as follows:
 - Jamaica and Guyana (responsible for Suriname and Belize)
 - U.K. (responsible for EU)
 - US
 - Beijing China
 - African Continent
- Madam President, we would have examined 13 agencies which have responsibility for exports, investment promotion, export capacity building and sector support development.

Readiness of invesTT and exporTT with regard to TIPA

- In the first instance, a readiness assessment was conducted for invesTT and exporTT. The Readiness Assessment covers key areas of leadership and governance, resources and processes, product and service delivery and measurement results. More specifically the readiness assessment provides details on the mandate, governance, strategic plans, partnerships, organisational structure, physical assets, portfolio of services, client

management system, marketing and promotion, communication and client satisfaction mechanism. The readiness assessment demonstrates a good standing for both organisations under these categories.

- Additionally, we would have reviewed similar offices in Jamaica, Spain, Columbia and Costa Rica.

Overall Benefits to be Gained

There are significant Benefits to be gained from the development of the TIPA, these include:

- Greater impact and results can be achieved through the merger of all trade and investment promotion activities into one organization.
- strengthen and modernize the country's export and investment promotion institutional arrangements to be more high profiled and on par with other similar regional and international agencies.
- simplify doing business with Trinidad and Tobago creating one interface for the domestic private sector and making it easier for the country's trading partners to trade and invest.
- a coordinated and streamlined approach to country imaging and branding. The TIPA will adopt a similar approach and raise the country's international profile and status in the international trading community

F. The Special Economic Zones Bill

- Madam President, one of the major legislative reforms being pursued by Government to transform Trinidad and Tobago's business environment is the development of the Special Economic Zones Bill which will replace the existing Free Zones Act of 1988 (amended in 2013).
- The existing Free Zone Regime has proven to be unworkable. It has also been categorized as harmful under Global Forum.
- According to the August 2021 update of the Forum for Harmful tax Practices (FHTP) Peer Review (which took place in April 2021), of the 18 regimes reviewed, only Trinidad and Tobago still has a 'harmful' regime because it was not able to fulfil its commitment to abolish its "Free Zone" regime within the agreed timelines.
- At this time, there is no immediate consequence for Trinidad and Tobago from its regime being classified as "harmful" but this classification could lead other jurisdictions to decide to impose defensive measures against Trinidad and Tobago (e.g., non-deductibility of costs or withholding tax).

- Denmark has withdrawn its double taxation agreement however this has little to no trading impact as our trading agreements within the EU-EPA overrides and business continues.
- The FHTP will continue its reviews and annual monitoring on specific aspects of tax regimes. The next review update is expected in the fourth quarter of 2021.
- Madam President, as we seek to increase our competitiveness, we must ensure compliance with international partners. The establishment of this SEZ will address this and is quite frankly more beneficial for all stakeholders.

Benefits of the Proposed SEZ Regime

- The SEZ regime is expected to:
 - Attract FDI (especially in strategic sectors)
 - Stimulate new domestic investment (increase private sector participation; PPPs)
 - Diversify economic activity
 - Increase foreign exchange supply
 - Expand non-energy export base
 - Encourage technology transfer and innovation
 - Increase compliance with international standards
- The Draft SEZ Bill has gone through a thorough assessment by the MTI and the Chief Parliamentary Counsel (CPC) of the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs in order to meet all local and international standards. The Draft Bill is currently receiving the attention of the Legislative Review Committee (LRC) and is expected to be enacted later this year.
- What makes this new SEZ regime unique is the designation of different types of Zones that accommodate various types of activities which are tied to our diversification agenda.
- These designations will apply to new local and foreign investments and would carry attractive financial and non-financial incentives such as reduced corporation tax.
- The Zone designations include:
 - (a) **Free Port** – *a duty free area, located at a port of entry where imported goods may be unloaded for warehousing, repackaging or processing of imported goods for value-adding activities, and logistics services;*
 - (b) **Free Trade Zone** – *a duty free area that accommodates specific activities targeted for international trade;*
 - (c) **Industrial Park** – *a purpose built industrial estate that leverages domestic and foreign fixed direct investment in value-added manufacturing industries;*
 - (d) **Specialized Sector Development Zone** – *a place designated for specialized activities including (i) manufacturing; (ii) maritime services; (iii) aviation services; (iv) fishing and fish processing; (v) agriculture and agro processing; (vi) information and communications technology; (vii) creative industries; (viii) financial services; (ix) medical tourism services; and (x) renewable energy.*

- (e) **Development Zone** – *activities focused on the development of a specific geographic region with emphasis on employment, skills training, entrepreneurship and rural development and overall social and economic development of the area.*
- In keeping with global obligations, the Government is working closely with the OECD to ensure that this legislation meets international standards, but also intends to work closely with local stakeholders to ensure that the transition to the new SEZ regime is a smooth and seamless one.

G. Development of an Apprenticeship Programme for Non-Energy Manufacturing Sector

- Madam President, the Manufacturing sector in Trinidad and Tobago is critical to Government's drive in achieving economic transformation and diversification. It is the third largest contributor to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contributing approximately TT\$30 billion or 19.2% of GDP and employed over 50,000 persons in 2020.
- Despite this, an inadequately qualified and suitable human resource capacity has been a constraint faced by the Sector impeding its competitiveness, as well as slowing its growth and expansion. To address this challenge, the Phase 2 Report of the Roadmap for Trinidad and Tobago: Transforming to a New Economy and a New Society has identified the establishment of a National Apprenticeship Programme for the non-energy sector modeled after the German vocational education and training system which combines theory and practical training in a real-life industrial work environment.
- To date, a draft Apprenticeship Programme has been designed in line with the specifications of the German Dual Model and in the first instance will facilitate the enrollment of 120 trainees. The Programme will provide training for occupational areas in the Manufacturing Sector namely; Mechanical Engineering; Industrial Maintenance Technology and Electrical/Electronic Technology and will be administered by the MIC-IT.
- The sum of **TT\$5.0 Mn** has been allocated under the 2021 Development Programme for this initiative.

SERVICES

SERVICES SECTOR

- Services represent the largest economic sector in the economy. In 2020, the Sector accounted for 53% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employed over 85% of the labour force.

Regional Services Sector Development Strategy for CARICOM

- The Strategy is intended to assist Member States strengthen the capacity and competitiveness of services subsectors to facilitate more competitive trade with the rest of the world.

- The services subsectors which have been prioritized by CARICOM for development are:
 - ✓ Professional,
 - ✓ Cultural and Entertainment;
 - ✓ Information and Communication Technology (ICT),
 - ✓ Sporting,
 - ✓ Education,
 - ✓ Health and Wellness,
 - ✓ Tourism and Postal and
 - ✓ Courier Services subsectors

- The Ministry of Trade and Industry has completed extensive consultations on the Strategy with all the relevant line Ministries and have shared its comments with the CARICOM Secretariat. The Secretariat is now completing its works to revise the document based on Member State's comments. It is anticipated that the revised document will be presented to CARICOM Trade Ministers for approval within the first half of 2022.

TTCSI

The following projects will be undertaken by TTCSI in the upcoming fiscal year:

- **Go Global TT Services** is a PPP initiative recently introduced to expand service exports from Trinidad and Tobago. Launched in September 2021 Go Global TT Services aims to enhance services sector firms by delivering export-readiness training and certification, coaching in the development of export plans and export marketing initiatives; market connections; and supporting the growth of services exports.

- In Fiscal 2022, **Go Global TT Services** will be supported by the **Gateway to Trade Programme**, which will assist small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in four (4) service sectors. This nine-month market readiness accelerator programme, will focus on business and professional services, information and communications technology (ICT), energy businesses, and MICE Tourism sectors.

- The Programme includes capacity building for service providers, SMEs and business support organizations including training and SME coaching, market and sector research, export plan development, export promotion initiatives and sector strategy development. There will also be hosting of virtual trade missions and B2B meetings for each firm.

- In the first phase, the Programme will target 80 firms with export experience and provide opportunities for micro and small businesses, female owned businesses, as well as sectors that have been significantly impacted by the global pandemic. This Programme is the first of its kind in Trinidad and Tobago.

- To work alongside the Gateway to Trade Programme, a **National Services Exporters Portal (NSEP)** will be launched in Fiscal 2022. The National Services Exporters Portal will brand and market Trinidad and Tobago as a premier international services hub. This online platform will provide up- to- date information on the local Services sector. Activities under the Portal will include the creation of a local services cluster portal, inward/outward trade missions and proactive media engagement.

- The Portal provides an additional benefit by facilitating engagement between services sector firms in joint marketing efforts such as branding, market research, and bundling of services to reduce export costs.
- Over five hundred (500) service providers will be registered on the platform and users will be able to access disaggregated services data. Local service providers on the portal will be able to interact with potential local and foreign clients. The profiles of local service providers will be made available to highlight their accomplishments in their various sectors.

THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Fashion

- Madam President, the Fashion Industry is one that presents countless economic opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, this government has continued to implement a number of programmes designed to increase the visibility of our local designers, enhance their output and export of fashion products manufactured here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Fashion Value Chain Investment Programme

- Madam President, in Fiscal 2021, the Government continued the Value Chain Investment Programme (VCIP), a strategic mentoring and training programme which provides support to eligible designers based on their developmental stage.
- During the pandemic, the VCIP helped transition fifty-seven (57) designers to transacting digitally on e-commerce platforms. Sixteen (16) new designers began exporting their goods to markets across the globe.

Table 5: Trinidad and Tobago designers on e-Commerce Platforms	
Name of Designer	Name of Company
Lisa Gittens	Sew Lisa
Sheldon Warner	SM Warner
Afiya Bishop	Loud By Afiya
Janelle Forde	J. Angelique
Sabrina Seurio	J Fab the Brand
Andell Mark	Gio Designs
Asha and Ayanna Diaz	Wadada Movement
Denise Scott	Scott Girl Jewellery
Kavir Mootoo	A Gardeners Heart
Kimberly Tobas	KIPT Apparel
Krista Gabriel	Krista Gabriel Designs
Liselle Frauenfelder	Frauenfelder Designs
Marlon George	Daww Designs
Nwannia Sorzano	Nwannia
Shaun Griffith Perez	Shaun Griffith Perez Designs
Kiran Knights	Kiran Knights Designs

Table 5: Trinidad and Tobago designers on e-Commerce Platforms

Name of Designer	Name of Company
Donna La Roche	La Roche Designs
Ti yanna Nelson	Raina Swim
Jassanya Jones	Deity Lifestyle
Ecliff Elie	Ecliff Elie Limited
Meiling Esau	Meiling Inc.
Robert Young	The Cloth
Claudia Pegus	Claudia Pegus Designs
Neil Allan Phillips	The Palette Stick
Shanice Mc Donald	RackPDH
Esther Joy Callendar	The Kingz Daughter
Avien Thomas	Osanie
Antoinette Sargarent	Salt Clothing and Accessories
Dayle Angus	Linkage Clothing
Kimberly Luces	Del a Culture
Kristy Ann Maharaj	Simply Escape
Michelle Charles	Silks by Miche
Natalie Howe	Decollette by Natalie Howe
Renee Alves	SugaBrat Resort Wear
Rachel Lee Young	Land of the Hummingbird
Rhian Ramkissoon	Honamic Designs
Stacey Weekes Benjamin	Diane Carlton
Princess Semper	Royal Iza Designs
Elizabeth Francis	Christique Clothing
Ria Denoon	Ria Denoon
Reuben Gonzales	RG Clothing
Sarah Katwaroo	Sarah Jo
Avanelle Richards	Exclusively Abstract
Onika Stephen-Callendar	Os2 Designs
Ariel Choon	Ariel Choon Designs
Nikisha Moore	N Joy Life Caribbean
Azizah Mohammed	Azizah The Brand
Jenelle Belfon	Mon Belle
Madena Baird	Ashley Only 1 Bags
Quielle Bosland	Soul Rebel Paradise
Tiffani Cupid	Cupid Designs
Jaya Persad	Pumpeii Official
Bianca Charles	Suruu Designs
Christine Lorde	Christine Wearable Art
Ternika Mahabal	Issa Vybe
Hakeem Williams	Rebel Entourage Movement

Table 5: Trinidad and Tobago designers on e-Commerce Platforms

Name of Designer	Name of Company
La Shauna Yatali	Caribbean Artisan by Her

Table 6: New Fashion Industry Exporters in 2021

Name of Designers	Name of Company
Neha Duwar	Neha Karina
Keega Simon	1ndividual Aesthetic
Lisa Gittens	Sew Lisa
Sheldon Warner	SM Warner
Adiola Monsegue	Genesis Swimwear
Kavir Mootoo	A Gardeners Heart
Kimberly Tobas	KIPT Apparel
Krista Gabriel	Krista Gabriel Designs
Liselle Frauenfelder	Frauenfelder Designs
Nwannia Sorzano	Nwannia
Shaun Griffith Perez	Shaun Griffith Perez Designs
Jassanya Jones	Deity Lifestyle
Shanice Mc Donald	RackPDH
Avien Thomas	Osanie
Antoinette Sargarent	Salt Clothing and Accessories
Rhian Ramkissoon	Honamic Designs

- To date, a total of one hundred and seventy-four (174) designers have undergone training under the VCIP (2017-2021):
 - Eleven designers (11) under Tier 1- Global Value Chain (GVC), ten designers
 - (10) under Tier 2-Non-Global Value Chain (Non-GVC);
 - seventy-five designers (75) under Tier 3-Business Advisory (FashionTT and NEDCO Partnership); and
 - seventy-eights (78) under Tier 4- Entrepreneurship Proficiency Programme (EPP).
- In Fiscal 2022, the VCIP will be continued and will train twenty-one (21) designers which will generate an estimated TT\$4 million in additional export sales to approximately twenty-five (25) countries.

Fashion Digital LookBook

- During Fiscal 2021, the Fashion Digital LookBook was launched with the purpose of showcasing and marketing the fashion collections of our talented fashion designers from Trinidad and Tobago.
- To date, three (3) editions of the Fashion Digital LookBook have been published while the fourth edition will be available in the last quarter of 2021.
- Each edition of the Digital Lookbook can be viewed on FashionTT's website, **fashiontt.co.tt** and all local designers will have an opportunity to present their offering within this Book.

- In Fiscal 2022, the Government will continue quarterly publication of the Fashion Digital LookBook and distribute printed copies at strategic locations to promote commercial activity in this Industry.

MUSIC TT

- Madam President, I now turn to music, musicians all over the world were negatively affected by the Pandemic and here at home was no different. To date, concerts and gatherings must still be held virtually. However, MusicTT must be commended for ensuring that capacity building programmes, webinars and even stay at home virtual concerts were continued.

Spotlight: Artiste Portfolio Development Programme

- This programme is an artist portfolio development programme facilitated by MusicTT aimed at creating a strong, balanced, upskilled portfolio of artistes and musicians for a range of possible international export opportunities.
- In Fiscal 2021, MusicTT launched an EP of Cohort 3 of Project Spotlight. This compilation of original music featured the eight (8) artistes in Cohort 3.
- The EP refers to a single-issue release and is being shopped to international music catalogues for sync opportunities.

The Island Stage South by South West (SXSW)

- Madam President, MusicTT sponsored the Island Stage, which is a platform dedicated to bringing music of the Caribbean to the forefront of the international music scene. This was exclusively streamed by South by South West (SXSW) as part of its online festival in March, 2021.
- SXSW has recognized the importance of giving Caribbean music and artistes an international platform to showcase their musical heritage and has announced that this will be an annual event.
- MusicTT has been given first preference to host The Island Stage in T&T for 2022. Participation in this event will assist our local talent with penetrating the international music market.
- MusicTT is currently encouraging local artistes to apply to perform at next year's event carded for March 14-20th, 2022.

The Business of Music

- MusicTT and TTCSI partnered with the producers of the Business of Music Initiative - Caribbean Export and the European Union to promote training opportunities to its stakeholders.
- A two- part series was conducted in 2021 with a total of 137 persons benefitting from the programme.

- Participants in this initiative were provided knowledge on how to develop an artist development plan, music marketing plan, utilize digital technology, Intellectual Property (IP) and contracts.
- Learning objectives included understanding the Business of Music; Identifying & Assessing Development Partners (Identify the various roles/who does what); Metadata, Digitization and Publishing; Music and IP; Contracts and Protection of IP Rights; and Marketing and the Elevator Pitch.

Live Music District

- On account of the Pandemic and restrictions to the entertainment industry, plans for LMD were drastically altered and series were held virtually.
- Looking to fiscal 2022, MusicTT proposes to introduce the Live Music District to Tobago, engage more experienced artistes via the creation of the Tier 2 “Premium Artistes” roster and create revenue-generating models for the Live Music District’s sustainability.

Music Tech Platform

- This platform is expected to create an all-access online portal with key information on the local music industry. It will provide stakeholders and in particular artistes with the ability to track radio plays in real-time.
- In fiscal 2022, the following key elements will be implemented as part of the Music Tech Platform are:
 - The development of an Independent Broadcast Monitoring and Identification System
 - The development and curation of a Local Music Database, with the use of Acoustic Fingerprinting and metadata tagging
 - Data analysis and continuous improvement of digital strategies.
 - Search engine optimization to familiarize audiences with the T&T music brand by making it appear frequently and foremost in internet searches.
 - Social network analysis to developing marketing strategies

RVRB (reverb) Experience Music Conference 2021

- Madam President, in September 2021, MusicTT held its first annual RVRB Experience Music Conference, a three-day virtual event filled with webinars, panel discussions and networking opportunities for the music industry.
- It is envisaged that this annual event will become internationally recognized as the event that music professionals attend to learn about Caribbean music, discover Caribbean artistes and musicians and network with Caribbean music professionals. Additionally it will position Trinidad and Tobago as the music hub of the Caribbean.

FILM TT

- Madam President, the Film Industry, is yet another of the creative sectors adversely affected by Covid restrictions. However, FilmTT continues to do the necessary work to ensure that there are a number of programmes aimed at building capacity within the local industry while also reaching out to external stakeholders to continue to promote Trinidad and Tobago as a film destination.

Script to Screen Programme – The Pitch

- In fiscal 2021, FilmTT collaborated with ExporTT, international film educator Stage32 and local film industry experts for an intensive capacity building programme. Twenty-two persons participated in 5 virtual workshops which focused on improving production skills as well as local filmmakers' ability to devise, create, deliver and promote quality, international audience-pleasing screen content.
- After which, fifteen filmmakers entered into a month long virtual film pitch process reminiscent of a Hollywood boardroom. During these sessions filmmakers were given the opportunity to present their stories in a bid to secure developmental funding. These real-life scenarios are imperative to understanding the international market and building institutional knowledge to be able to better exploit these opportunities in the future.
- I commend and congratulate all participants on taking advantage of this opportunity and investing in themselves especially during these very trying times. You are all winners.

MARITIME SECTOR

- Madam President, the Government recognizes Maritime services as a Sector that has an enormous potential to contribute to the sustainable growth and diversification of Trinidad and Tobago's economy through, inter alia, revenue generation, employment creation and foreign exchange earnings.
- To this end, we are creating an enabling environment and implementing measures to ensure the expansion of Maritime in Trinidad and Tobago.

National Maritime Policy and Strategy

- During Fiscal 2021, Government completed and it is soon to be submitted for Cabinet's consideration, a National Maritime Policy and Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago with the objectives of maximizing the sustainable use of oceans and seas, increasing competitiveness of the Shipping industry and facilitating the expansion of the Maritime sector.
- The Sector's growth and development has been stunted by a lack of investment, outdated and inefficient bureaucratic processes and weak maritime regulation.
- To address this, the new Policy focuses on two (2) core priorities;
 - **Promoting Emerging Sectors**
 - Aquaculture and Fisheries;
 - Offshore Renewable Energies;
 - Alternative Fossil Fuels;
 - **Enhancing Existing Sectors**
 - Yachting;
 - Tourism;
 - Ship building, Repair, Breaking and Recycling; and
 - Bunkering, Cold Stacking and Transshipment.
- Through strategic interventions, the Policy will transform the Sector by strengthening institutions, enhancing human resource competency and implementing efficient processes using innovation and technologies.

- In Fiscal 2021, GORTT, announced a PPP Landlord Model Project for the Port of Port of Spain to position this asset as major destination port for cruise shipping and transshipment hub which will advance our diversification thrust.
- Government is also taking steps to attract an experienced international shipbuilder to establish a state-of-the-art ship repair and maintenance facility for both commercial and public sailing craft in the Western Peninsula utilizing the asset base of CL Marine Limited and its subsidiaries.

The Yachting Sub-Sector

- Madam President, Yachting is a sub-sector within Maritime services that is economically viable given Trinidad and Tobago's strategic geographic location below the hurricane belt. This positions Trinidad and Tobago as an ideal location for the provision of Maritime services including storage and the provision of world class yacht repair and maintenance services.
- This industry was particularly hard hit through COVID-19 and the MTI will commit to full engagement with the necessary financial support to get this industry going again and revive once more the North Western peninsula.

LOOKING FOWARD IN MANUFACTURING

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

- The Manufacturing Sector is critical to the government's drive to post-Covid-19 recovery and regaining economic stability. The Sector accounts for 19.3% of GDP and employs over 52,000.
- In the last eighteen months, the economy was bolstered by the strong performance of this sector despite international supply chain challenges. Our local Food and Beverage manufacturers fed the nation and also the Region as our exports of these items were uninterrupted despite the very difficult period.
- Madam President, as we seek to sustainably develop the manufacturing sector, the MTI will be undertaking two technical studies to ensure the sectors longevity and prosperity.

Study on Strengthening Sectoral Linkages in Trinidad and Tobago

- Madam President, there are many untapped manufacturing opportunities existing in areas such as agriculture, maritime, tourism and services sectors which have not been explored as a result of weak linkages.

- In this regard, the MTI intends to secure a Consultancy to undertake a Study on Strengthening Sectoral Linkages in Trinidad and Tobago. The objective of the Study is to provide sound technical grounding, to inform government policy to identify and exploit potential forward and backward linkages between the manufacturing sector and other sectors in Trinidad and Tobago.
- The clear advantages are new product development, sharpened competitiveness and export possibilities.

Scope of Work

- The Consultancy will undertake the following over a period of six (6) months:
 - Examine Trinidad and Tobago's manufacturing, energy, agriculture, maritime and tourism sectors and identify potential forward and backward linkages
 - Provide policy recommendations to facilitate the realization of the identified linkages
 - Develop a programme of work to implement recommendations with the necessary effective strategies.

Study on Regional Value Chains for the Manufacturing Sector

- In the 2020 PNM Manifesto, the Government stated its desire to ***Facilitate the Creation of Regional Value Chains Through Production Integration Within CARICOM.***
- A regional value chain would involve the splitting of the production process in stages at different locations. This fragmentation of production embraces value added contributions from different members of the region.
- This would allow for the identification of new and alternate sources of inputs for manufacturing including raw material, labour/skill needs, as well as, retail and distribution requirements. It will also help uncover new business relationships that can improve operational efficiencies and lead to new product innovations, in addition to opening new business opportunities in Trinidad and Tobago for the CARICOM business community.
- In pursuit of the above, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, intends to secure a Consultancy to undertake a Study on the Regional Value Chains for the Manufacturing sector in CARICOM.
- The objective of the Study is to provide sound technical ground, to help inform government policy, to create and exploit new and existing regional value chains within CARICOM to aid the manufacturing sector in Trinidad and Tobago and elsewhere in the Region.

Scope of Work

- The Consultancy will undertake the following over a period of six (6) months:
 - Undertake a detailed examination of the Trinidad and Tobago's manufacturing sector including underperforming sectors for which Trinidad and Tobago has comparative advantages to determine its inputs into manufacturing needs including raw material, labour/skill needs, as well as, retail and distribution requirements.
 - Examine the CARICOM Region to identify existing regional suppliers of manufacturing inputs and retail and distribution services for Trinidad and Tobago's manufacturing sector and

- sectors with comparative advantages. This should include the capacity of regional suppliers to meet local demand and quality standards.
- Develop a Map of the Regional value chain of the manufacturing sector in CARICOM, identifying the potential production integration opportunities
 - Make specific policy recommendations for the Government to harvest the opportunities identified.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Madam President, I have articulated a number of initiatives and programmes to boost and increase the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector thus far but Madam President, permit me to digress into the issue of Climate Change and Green Energy as it relates to the manufacturing sector.
- Madam President, Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory to the Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change, which was adopted by 196 countries in Paris, on 12 December 2015 and entered into force on 4 November 2016.
- Its central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius (above pre-industrial levels) and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- The Paris Agreement requires all Parties to put forward their best efforts through “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs) and to strengthen these efforts in the years ahead. This includes requirements that all Parties report regularly on their emissions and on their implementation efforts. On February 22nd 2018, Trinidad and Tobago deposited its instrument of ratification to the Paris Agreement on climate change. Through ratification of the Paris Agreement, Trinidad and Tobago has confirmed its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and pledged its formal commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- In this regard, the Ministry of Trade and Industry has a role to support the execution of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Implementation Plan of Trinidad and Tobago, particularly in the context of the manufacturing sector.
- The manufacturing sector is said to be the third largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions globally. Therefore, it must do its part to reduce pollution and become more environmentally friendly so as to minimize its effect on climate change.
- There are many ways in which the manufacturing sector can become eco-friendlier and adopt greater energy savings and carbon reducing practices. Some of these include:
 - Using Circular Manufacturing to Save Energy and Reduce Waste
 - Implement Safety Measures by Utilizing Automation Tools, AI, IoT, and Cobots
 - Digitize Internal Communication
 - Implement Eco-friendly Products
- Madam President, let me take this opportunity to highlight a couple companies who have recently incorporated in some way or another green technology or adaptations to their processes.

- TCL – Low Carbon Eco Cement (reducing carbon emissions)
 - United Engineering Services Limited recently awarded a contract to build, install and commission the Zandolie Gas Platform for DeNovo Energy Ltd. This platform will be fully powered by renewable energy.
 - Pricesmart Plastics PET (polyethelene terephthalate) Packaging Plant for packaging food and plastics. As you are aware PET is a highly sustainable material which is fully recyclable.
- Something as simple as lighting. Changing warehouse or plant lighting from incandescent lights into LED lights can result in energy consumption savings. Not only are LEDs more effective, lasting longer than incandescent, they are a green solution since they use 75% less energy than regular lights. That makes a massive difference considering the scale of manufacturing plants, especially in the long run.

Export Booster Initiative

- Steps are already being taken by the Government to focus on the preservation of the environment through the promotion of green practices for local manufacturing and encouraging manufacturers to incorporate greener inputs in their manufacturing process.
- Under the Export Booster Initiative (EBI), TT\$2.5 Million was allocated to encourage activity in green industries. Hence, companies who participate will receive technical and financial help in transitioning to biodegradable and more ecologically friendly packaging practices and production.
- Additionally, in this fiscal budget, the Minister of Finance announced a number of measures which will positively align with our obligations under the Paris Agreement.

Carbon Capture – tax credit

- In order to further reduce emissions, the government has also pledged a 30% tax credit on the cost of investment of up to a maximum 500k for companies that invest in carbon capture and storage and enhanced oil recovery. This initiative will commence on January 1, 2022.

Electric Vehicles

- Electric vehicles are free of duties and taxes on new and used vehicles under 2 years old.

Scrap Iron

- The Government is currently reviewing a Policy for further formalization of the Scrap Iron Industry of which considerations for the environment are a priority, apart from the total enhancement of the sector for increased exports.
- Call to manufacturers – think green, go green! Do your part to help reduce this country’s carbon foot print.