



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Trade and Industry

***“HRMATT C-Suite
Conversations 2nd
Edition”
“Going Global”***

REMARKS

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

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SALUTATIONS

- Dr. the Honorable Amery Brown, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs
- Ms. Cavelle Joseph-St. Omer, President, Human Resource Management Association of Trinidad and Tobago-HRMATT
- Members of the Board of HRMATT
- Members of the Media
- Specially invited guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

It gives me great pleasure to present the policy perspectives of the Ministry of Trade and Industry at the second edition of HRMATT's *C – Suite Conversations - Going Global*. Going Global is a most fitting theme for today's event, which will further discussions initiated at the *C – Suite Conversations*' first edition "*Future of Work*". In fact, today's theme reinforces what we all have long known, **the future of work is going global**.

This is evident by the rapid digitization of business processes and the increasing opportunities in offshoring, outsourcing and nearshoring, all of which have been largely driven by the Fourth Industrial Revolution- Industry 4.0 and further catalyzed by the recent Covid-19 pandemic and other subsequent events.

As organizations transition into this new business operational landscape, the role and support of Human Resources Practitioners becomes ever more critical. I must therefore commend Human Resources Management Association of Trinidad and Tobago (HRMATT) for hosting *C-Suite Conversations*, a dynamic forum which facilitates dialogue among a wide spectrum of industry leaders to strategize and share gainful insights on what organizations in Trinidad and Tobago require from Human Resource Professionals to navigate this new landscape.

Emerging Global Trends in Human Resource Management

Ladies and gentlemen, Human Resource Practitioners have had to contend with shifting global trends. These include managing new modes of work; actively looking for transferable skills such as teamwork, communication, time management and organizational skills from new hires; and transitioning focus beyond workers' physical well-being and safety in an effort to give persons more flexibility, training and opportunities for empowerment. There is also the continued responsibility to place diversity, equity and inclusion in the spotlight, to combat bias, discrimination, and harassment, narrow the wage gap and address other workplace issues. Great attention is required in these areas.

Most importantly, HR managers have, I am certain, seen the value in bringing back the human touch in the face of increasing digitization and automation. This aims to enhance employer-employee engagement, improve customer relations and increase workplace loyalty especially following periods of great disruptions such as the pandemic.

Reskilling and Re-tooling of Trinidad and Tobago's Human Resource Capacity

Ladies and Gentlemen, the world of work is evolving and the changes in demanded skills and competencies are keeping a pace. By 2030, as many as 25 percent *more* workers may need to switch occupations than before the pandemic according to the McKinsey Global Institute's report on *The future of work after COVID-19*. In this regard, the Government is taking the lead in the retooling and upskilling of our human capital to keep up with these changes in the labour market.

Investing in our people is critical to our development and one of the foremost policies of the Government as outlined in both the Roadmap to Recovery and Vision 2030's thematic area of "Putting People First and Nurturing our Greatest Asset". As such, the Ministry of Trade and Industry is focused on delivering

initiatives geared towards the enhancement of our national workforce to meet the needs of our private sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is imperative that HR Practitioners be aware of public policy and understand the sectors poised for growth, both at the domestic level and internationally, and the respective requirements of the workforce throughout various organisations, in terms of skill, capacity and necessary enhancements.

The MTI is charged with the responsibility of growing trade, business and investment, with particular focus on driving the non-energy sectors of the economy including the **Manufacturing, Services, Creative and Maritime Sectors**.

Manufacturing Sector

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has always valued the significant role of our local manufacturing sector and remains committed to transforming it into one that is globally competitive, productive and innovative, utilizing advanced technologies and environmentally friendly practices as articulated in the Roadmap to Recovery Report, the National Development Strategy (Vision 2030) and the Trinidad and Tobago Trade Policy 2019-2023.

The Manufacturing Sector remains a major **contributor to GDP** at roughly **20%** with output of approximately \$28.1 billion in fiscal 2022 and employs over **52,000 persons**.

Understanding some of the human resource inadequacies within the sector, the Government has implemented a number of measures aimed at retooling and reskilling human resource capacity of the sector.

Apprenticeship Programme for the Non-energy Manufacturing Sector

In May of this year, the MTI launched the Apprenticeship Programme for the Non-energy Manufacturing Sector. This three (3) year Programme aims to build the human resource capacity and fill the labour skills gap within the Sector to drive further development, innovation and competitiveness. The Programme will train over three hundred (300) persons in the areas of:

- Mechanical Engineering Technology;
- Electrical Electronics Technology;
- Industrial Maintenance Technology; and
- Mechatronics.

Apprentices will also complete a six (6) month on-the-job training component at an industry partner site to gain practical experience.

Apprenticeship Programme for the Wood and Wood products Manufacturing Sub-sector

Following the success of the Non-energy Manufacturing Programme, an Apprenticeship Programme for the Wood and Wood products manufacturing sub-sector was subsequently launched in August 2022. This Programme aims to increase and enhance the pool of human capital within this sub-sector by training apprentices in the areas of:

- Carpentry;
- Woodworking; and
- Joinery Technology

This two (2) year Programme will train fifty (50) apprentices who will also have the opportunity to undertake a six (6) month on-the-job training component similar to the apprenticeship programme for the non-energy manufacturing sector.

School to Work Apprenticeship Allowance

Ladies and gentlemen, understanding the importance and need for experience and exposure to the world of work for young people, the Government in its fiscal 2023 budget introduced the School to Work Apprenticeship Allowance to encourage businesses to hire persons aged 16 to 25 for short-term apprenticeship. Participating businesses will be eligible for an allowance of 150 percent for all remuneration paid under such an allowance, up to a maximum of 5 percent of the company's total wages and salaries bill for 1 year.

Commercial Offices and Commercial Attachés

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we continue to do the ground work to build our human capital, we must simultaneously do the necessary to increase our international exposure. As such, in addition to executing trade missions, the MTI is in the process of establishing Commercial Offices and Commercial Attachés in various Diplomatic Missions in an effort to further promote Trinidad and Tobago's export profile, assist in diversifying export markets, attract inward investment and expand market access. Select countries for the establishment of Commercial Officers and Deputy Commercial Officers include Panama, the United Kingdom, and Miami and for the appointment of Commercial Attaches include South Africa, Guyana, Jamaica and China.

Market Access Opportunities-Trade Agreements

Additionally, we must capitalize and expand our market access opportunities. Trinidad and Tobago has signed a number of preferential trade agreements bilaterally or through CARIFORUM and CARICOM. These include agreements with the European Union and the United Kingdom and several countries in Latin America and the region such as Costa Rica, Colombia, Panama, Cuba and the Dominican Republic, which provide market access for our goods.

More recently, in pursuit of a robust trade agenda to secure new market opportunities for our Non-Energy Sectors, Trinidad and Tobago is negotiating partial scope agreements with Chile and Curacao. In October 2021, Trinidad and Tobago signed a General Framework Agreement with Chile. A third round of negotiations is scheduled to be held during December 2022.

It is expected that the General Framework Agreement for the negotiation for the Trinidad and Tobago-Curacao PSTA would be signed by November 2022.

Services Sector

The Services sector has also been earmarked for further development and expansion. In 2021, the Central Statistical Office reported that the Services sector contributed sixty-four percent (64%) to real GDP and employed approximately eighty-seven percent (87%) of the workforce. For the same period, the value of Services exports however was minimal, contributing to only 4% of total exports and this must grow.

This labour intensive Sector is significantly reliant on strong human resource capacity and growth will require the upskilling of persons and be fueled by the expansion of numbers. Herein lies many opportunities.

Trinidad and Tobago Trade Policy 2019-2023

Our National Trade Policy (2019-2023) identifies **eight (8) priority Services Sectors** for development namely:

- Tourism;
- Other education, medical and health and wellness services;
- Financial services;
- Creative industries and entertainment services;
- Energy services;
- Professional services;
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT); and
- Maritime services

The Government and also within the context of work being done at the level of CARICOM, has developed and implemented a wide range of policies aimed at building capacity within the subsectors identified and expanding international market opportunities for our Services sector. These Government led initiatives equip the Services sector with the necessary tools to achieve strategic objectives of urgent national interest. Not only is this critical for managing rapidly changing business landscapes and labor markets, but also for boosting our presence on the global stage.

Policy initiatives to increase market opportunities for the Services Sector

Services Sector Export Capacity Building Initiatives

In 2021, the Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Services Industries (TTCSI) with who the MTI is a key partner, launched the “**Go Global TT Services**” a services export campaign to develop service sector businesses and professionals with the capacity to export. The campaign encompasses the following initiatives:

- I. **Services Go Global (SGG) Training Programme** –Which takes exporters through four (4) stages and twelve (12) modules of export preparation training.
- II. **Gateway to Trade (G2T)** – an Export Readiness Incubator and Training Programme designed to strengthen trade promotion and foster growth in Services Sector exports. This entails **capacity building** for services SMEs including training and coaching, market/sector research, export plan development, export promotion initiatives and sector strategy development. As at September 2022, the Programme has facilitated the development of forty-three (43) export plans and company profiles across a wide cross-section of services subsectors including IT, creative and cultural industries, health and wellness, and business and professional services

III. **National Services Exporters' Portal (NSEP)** – which provides up- to-date disaggregated services data and serves as a digital space to facilitate interactions between local services providers and potential clients globally. This Portal also delivers reliable services statistics necessary for the development of data-driven policies, initiatives and incentives.

Creative Sector

Ladies and gentlemen, as part of our own “**Going Global**” vision at the Ministry, we view the Creative Sector as a critical Sector in further driving the internationalization of locally produced goods and services. The Sector purposes as a vehicle to commercializing the talents and creativity of our people. To attain the immense benefits from this Sector, the MTI through umbrella agencies has implemented a number of initiatives to enhance our creative capacity.

More specifically, in the Fashion Sector, the **Fashion Value Chain Investment Programme** managed by FashionTT, is geared towards improving the fashion value chain by refining the in-house performance of local tailors, designers, and fashion houses. This Programme, better positions local designers to execute their respective business plans, increase their exports and enhance their competitiveness to compete in the international market.

As part of a market penetration drive, support is provided for more advanced (export ready) designers to participate in virtual trade missions and engage in direct Business-to-Business meetings with potential buyers.

In March of this year, several designers participated in FashionTT's 1st Virtual Fashion Tradeshow and Exhibition to Miami. To date 1,056 persons have visited this virtual platform from various countries including South Africa, United Kingdom, Canada, China, India, Malaysia, Japan, Philippines, Hawaii, Nigeria, Gabon, Australia, Jamaica, Barbados, Grenada and Guyana.

In 2023, the MTI shall continue the implementation of the Fashion Value Chain Programme.

Maritime Sector

The Maritime Sector has also been identified as one of the key Sectors to be taken globally to further engender economic growth and diversification. The sector encompasses opportunities for cold stacking and transshipment, ship repair and dry-docking, and the further development of the yachting sector, among others. Trinidad and Tobago's ideal location below the hurricane belt, naturally sheltered, deep and calm harbor and well developed maritime infrastructure and industry support mechanisms make us a prime destination for investment.

Trinidad and Tobago's Trade and Investment Promotion Agency

To solidify Trinidad and Tobago's goods and services in the highly competitive international market, we must continue to reinvent ourselves based on the global climate, national policy and needs of exporters and investors. In this regard, the Government is establishing a Trade and Investment Promotion Agency aimed at transforming and increasing the competitiveness of the trade and business environment of Trinidad and Tobago. This Agency is expected to strengthen and modernize the country's export and investment promotion to raise our international profile and status in the international trading community.

Anticipated to be operational next year, this Agency will be responsible for export capacity building; export promotion for goods and services; investment promotion for goods and services; and support for the development of the domestic services sector, among other things.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen, the amalgam of initiatives implemented by Government is expected to accelerate and amplify the presence of Trinidad and Tobago's professionals, experts and businesses on the global stage, at the same time increasing the country's GDP and revenue streams. Quite pointedly, we are all to remain laser focused on, not simply, just accelerating the country's growth but ensuring citizens are able to participate in this growth.

In closing, I wish to thank HRMATT for this opportunity to address and share the initiatives currently being pursued by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. I look forward to hearing from the very esteemed panel on the most urgent issues in Human Resources and the innovative strategies conceptualized to tackle these challenges as we continue to work together in empowering various Sectors and Industries in **Going Global**.

Thank you.