



# Media Release

## WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION'S REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON FISHERIES SUBSIDIES FOR CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

**January 17, 2023:-** Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry delivered the keynote address during the opening of the World Trade Organization's Regional Workshop on Fisheries Subsidies for Caribbean Countries on Tuesday 17 January, 2023. This technical 3-day workshop aims to provide participating nations with a greater understanding of the particulars of the newly adopted WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, the required steps toward implementation and capacity building to advance the needs of the sector.

In delivering her address to the regional audience, Minister Gopee-Scoon urged participants to absorb the knowledge, information and perspectives that could be gleaned from the programme. While the Agreement will have positive effects on the sustainability of marine fish stocks and fisheries, and is supported by Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean, the Minister made clear the difficulties that small-island developing states will face in implementing the onerous notification requirements under the Agreement. In this regard, she applauded the establishment of a voluntary WTO Funding Mechanism to assist countries with the technical assistance and capacity building needs related to implementation.

In bringing the nexus between the fisheries sector and food security sharply into focus, the Minister highlighted the importance of small-scale artisanal and subsistence fisheries for employment, livelihoods, food security, nutrition, and the health and wellbeing of the people of [the] Region.

To respond to the need for greater regulatory and administrative fisheries management frameworks in Trinidad and Tobago, the Minister also stated that the Ministries with responsibility for fisheries management; trade; customs and excise, maritime services and national security, along with the Tobago House of Assembly, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in August 2019, for Inter-Agency collaboration in Regulating Fishing; Fishing Related Activities;

and Relevant Trade. Signatories of the MOU are currently implementing activities to address Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing in the ports and waters under the jurisdiction of Trinidad and Tobago, not least of which is strengthening national legislation through the Fisheries Management Bill which is currently before a Joint Select Committee of Parliament.

The Workshop will feature presentations by representatives from the WTO Secretariat including Mr. Strahinja Ivanovic, Fisheries Expert under the Rules Division of the WTO, as well as other regional experts such as, Ambassador Wayne McCook, Assistant Secretary-General, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat and Mr. Milton Haughton, Executive Director, the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM) Secretariat.

The WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies (AFS), adopted at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) on June 17, 2022, prohibits subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, overfished stocks and fishing the unregulated high seas. The Agreement also promises to be a ground-breaking tool for better fisheries management by creating new transparency requirements and greatly improving data collection on the health of fisheries stocks as well as on related subsidies.

Given our significant food import bill, the fisheries sector is of critical importance. In 2021, imports of fish and fish products amounted to TT\$174 million while exports accounted for TT\$77 Million. This workshop is expected to have significant benefits for Trinidad and Tobago, as host nation namely the ability to gain first-hand knowledge, experience and information as it relates to the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies as well as an opportunity to build national capacity for matters related to WTO Fisheries Subsidies and a clearer perspective on Trinidad and Tobago implementing the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies going forward.

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