



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

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***SheTrades International Women's Day  
Seminar:  
"Count her In: Invest in Women.  
Accelerate Progress***

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**OPENING REMARKS**

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

**MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup>, 2024**

## Salutations

- Mrs. Sharon Rowley
- Senator the Honourable Allyson West, Minister of Public Administration
- The Honourable Dr. Nyan Gadsby Dolly, Minister of Education
- The Honourable Camille Robinson-Regis, Minister of Housing and Urban Development
- The Honourable Ayanna Webster-Roy, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister – Gender and Child Affairs
- The Honourable Lisa Morris Julian, Minister in the Ministry of Education
- Senator Renuka Sagrarsingh-Sooklal, Minister in the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs
- Senator Laurel Lezama-Lee Sing
- Distinguished speakers, Dr. Winnette McIntosh Ambrose
- Ms. Akousua Dardaine Edwards
- Specially invited guests
- Staff of the Ministry of Trade and Industry and exporTT
- Women of the Trinidad and Tobago SheTrades Hub
- Students and teachers
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning and Happy International Women's Day!

I am delighted to be here to celebrate International Women's Day 2024 at the Ministry of Trade and Industry's SheTrades Business Seminar under the United Nation's theme "Count her In: Invest in Women. Accelerate Progress".

This year's theme captures the essence of the work we at the Ministry of Trade and Industry and exporTT have been pursuing under the Trinidad and Tobago SheTrades Hub. The main objective of SheTrades is to connect women entrepreneurs to international markets. With the establishment of our National Hub in October 2020, the first of its kind in the Caribbean, we have been working assiduously to count you, the women of Trinidad and Tobago in, as valuable players in the business and trading community.

We understand that for any country to progress there must be full participation of women in the labour force. The World Economic Forum estimates that advancing women's employment could add US\$ 12 trillion to global GDP and has the potential to boost economic output in countries as much as 35%.

### **Achievements of the Trinidad and Tobago SheTrades Hub**

Today we have over 700 local women-owned businesses registered and subscribed to the Trinidad and Tobago SheTrades Hub.

Through our various programmes and initiatives under the SheTrades Hub, we have been investing in you to accelerate your progress. In fact, since the launch of the initiative:

- over 160 women across Trinidad and Tobago were trained in the areas of Identifying and Assessing Export Markets; Developing Export Plans, Export Readiness and Following up on Export Leads, in order to further strengthen their business skills;
- 24 female entrepreneurs received funding to participate and showcase their products at international and regional trade shows in Madrid, St. Lucia and Barbados. exporTT, our national export promotion agency is working with these women to follow-up on leads generated; and
- 66 women-owned businesses benefitted from funding to participate at local trade shows and markets, including the Export Centers Company Limited Craft Market and the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association, Trade and Investment Convention. Through these initiatives, these women-owned businesses were able to boost their visibility, increase sales and expand business connections.

We will be all pleased to know that nine (9) Trinidad and Tobago women-led businesses representing the Food and Beverage, Beauty Cosmetics, Handicraft, Apparel and Health Services sectors, through their registration on the SheTrades Hub were selected to participate at this year's SheTrades Summit in Abu Dhabi. These women had the opportunity to attend two days of panel discussions, masterclasses and specific networking sessions with other female business owners from around the world.

These are just some of the successes to date, later in the Programme, you will hear personal testimonials from some of the women.

#### **International Women's Day Business Seminar 2024**

Today, we have sought to bring together powerful female leaders, executives and entrepreneurs, along with the next generation of young female leaders in Trinidad and Tobago from amongst our schools, for an inspiring and thought provoking session.

To the Business students with us today, I encourage you to capitalize on your academic studies and harness your innate ingenuity, passion and creativity to cultivate new ideas that may be turned into valuable goods, services and business opportunities for our country. Entrepreneurship is about more than just starting a business; it is about creating your own path, shaping your own future and making a meaningful impact on society. By choosing entrepreneurship, you are choosing to be the architects of your own future. I encourage you continue to strive for excellence in every aspect of your lives.

To the business women, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you for joining the Hub and taking advantage of the opportunities to start and grow your business. I encourage those who have not yet done so, to come on board the Platform.

I am pleased to have with us this morning, two distinguished guest speakers – Dr. Winnette McIntosh Ambrose, Trinidad and Tobago born engineer-turned-entrepreneur and two-time Food Network champion and Ms. Akousua Dardaine Edwards, gender and entrepreneur specialist and founder of the Enabling Enterprise Project in Trinidad and Tobago.

It is my hope that this Seminar will inspire you along your entrepreneurial journey – whether you are pursuing business-related studies, now contemplating being an entrepreneur, in the early start-up phase or already have an established business.

**Conclusion**

I want to express the continued commitment of the Ministry of Trade and Industry towards supporting the SheTrades Project and women in business and trade in Trinidad and Tobago.

I look forward to your continued participation as we partner to create opportunities for women to succeed in business, where voices are heard and contributions are valued. By harnessing the full potential of women, we can drive economic growth, foster innovation, and build a more prosperous and sustainable future for all.

Thank you.