



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade and Industry

MEDIA RELEASE

T&T's SheTrades Hub – investing in women to accelerate progress

March 11, 2024: In commemoration of International Women's Day, the Ministry of Trade and Industry hosted an inspiring and thought provoking Business Seminar under the United Nation's theme, "Count her In: Invest in Women" on Friday, 8 March, 2024, which brought together female leaders, executives and entrepreneurs, along with the next generation of young female leaders from the nation's secondary schools. The Seminar sought to empower and motivate women to grow and transform their businesses and overcome challenges to achieve their full potential.

In delivering the Opening Remarks at the event held at Government Plaza, Port of Spain, Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry, assured the female entrepreneurs in attendance that the Ministry and exporTT have been working assiduously to count the women of Trinidad and Tobago in, as valuable players in the business and trading community and connecting women entrepreneurs to international markets.

With over 700 local women-owned businesses now registered and subscribed to the Trinidad and Tobago SheTrades Hub, programmes and initiatives have included training in areas of Identifying and Assessing Export Markets; Developing Export Plans, Export Readiness and Following up on Export Leads. Minister Gopee-Scoon revealed that since inception, 24 female entrepreneurs have received funding to participate and showcase their products at international and regional trade shows in Madrid, St. Lucia and Barbados; and 66 women-owned businesses benefitted from funding to participate at local trade shows and markets. Through these initiatives, these women-owned businesses were able to boost their visibility, increase sales and expand business connections.

The Minister also shared that nine Trinidad and Tobago women-led businesses, through their registration on the SheTrades Hub, were selected to participate at this year's SheTrades Summit in Abu Dhabi, participating in panel discussions, masterclasses and specific networking sessions with other female business owners from around the world.

Not to be discounted, young women too have a role to play in entrepreneurship. Addressing the young women and business students in attendance, the Minister urged them to capitalize on their academic studies and harness their innate ingenuity, passion and creativity to cultivate new ideas that may be turned into valuable goods, services and business opportunities for the 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,” said Gopee-Scoon.

Notably, 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 percent.

The adage “empowered women empower women,” rung true at the seminar, as guest presenters shared inspirational messages with the attendees.

Guest presenter Ms. Akousua Dardaine Edwards, a Gender and Entrepreneur Specialist and Founder of the Enabling Enterprise Project in Trinidad and Tobago, shared the success that can be derived for both women and their businesses from decisions that come from a sense of innate worthiness. Edwards said successful women entrepreneurs have these things in common: they have an unwavering belief in themselves, hold themselves accountable, have a clear vision, have the courage to take action and listen to their intuition, and do not seek outside validation as their only source of praise.

Delivering the Keynote Address, Dr. Winnette McIntosh Ambrose, engineer-turned entrepreneur and two-time Food Network Champion, explained that her non-linear path from Engineering to Entrepreneurship has prepared her to access key opportunities and in so doing she encouraged participants to turn apparent setbacks into competitive advantages to build long term resilience in their own business.

Other special guests in attendance at the seminar included Mrs. Sharon Rowley, Senator the Honourable Allyson West, Minister of Public Administration; the Honourable Dr. Nyan Gadsby Dolly, Minister of Education; the Honourable Ayanna Webster-Roy, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs and the Honourable Lisa Morris Julian, Minister in the Ministry of Education.

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