



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

E-Trade Readiness Assessment Validation Session and Workshop on The National E-Commerce Strategy

OPENING REMARKS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON
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JULY 16TH, 2024

SALUTATIONS

Ms. Joanna Kazana, UN Resident Coordinator, Trinidad and Tobago
Mrs. Ava Mahabir-Dass, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry
Ms. Ina Hodge, E-commerce and Digital Economy Branch, Division of Technology and Logistics, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD)
Public and Private Sector Stakeholders
Members of the Media
Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

It is my pleasure to deliver opening remarks at this e-Trade Readiness Assessment Validation Session and Workshop, as we continue to advance the development of Trinidad and Tobago's National E-Commerce Strategy 2024-2029.

A warm welcome to the UNCTAD Team once again to Port of Spain. We are happy to have you with us and continue to partner with you on this important national Project.

This Session signifies an important milestone in the work which commenced in December 2023 with the signing of the Contribution and Technical Assistance Agreement with UNCTAD for the development of Trinidad and Tobago's National E-Commerce Strategy. It will mark the completion of the first phase of the Project, that is the eTrade Readiness Assessment and the commencement of work on the second, which is the drafting of the Strategy.

eTrade Readiness Assessment

Following the Multi-Stakeholder Consultations held in Port of Spain in March 2024, stakeholders have been brought together once again today, to assess and validate the findings of Trinidad and Tobago's eTrade Readiness Assessment.

The Assessment presents the gaps, opportunities and challenges to e-commerce development in Trinidad and Tobago across seven (7) policy areas. It is a product of comments shared during that Consultation Session; along with bilateral meetings; online surveys with the public and private sector and consumers; as well as desk research on other related strategies.

Some of the preliminary areas already identified for action include updated legal and regulatory frameworks; enhanced and coordinated logistical system for delivery of goods; strengthened data collection efforts on ICT and e-commerce to inform policy-making;

affordable online payment solutions; business incubators and digital literacy programmes; and targeted financing programs for small and medium sized enterprises.

This Assessment is a blueprint which will inform the development of the National E-Commerce Strategy; therefore, I must stress the importance of your objective and critical input and comments towards ensuring that the document accurately captures the local e-commerce context in your respective areas of focus. This will ensure the development of a Strategy that is well suited to Trinidad and Tobago and impactful for trade and business.

Drafting of the National E-Commerce Strategy

I am pleased that work will also commence on the drafting of the National E-Commerce Strategy this afternoon, where stakeholders will provide on guidance the overarching components of the Strategy, through targeted discussions on the vision and mission, as well as identification of priority areas of focus for Trinidad and Tobago.

According to the World Trade Organization, the rise of the digital economy provides a range of new opportunities for small and medium sized firms to play a more active role in global value chains. E-commerce and digital transformation remain a core area of focus for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, as a strong driving force for innovation, growth, trade and social prosperity. This is demonstrated through the establishment of a dedicated Ministry of Digital Transformation to lead in the creation of a digital economy, digital government and digital society; along with a number of digitalisation policies and initiatives, such as the National Strategy for a DigitalTT: 2023-2026, TTBizLink for the online processing of permits and licences and GovPayTT which facilitates cashless payment for government services.

With this in mind, the National E-Commerce Strategy should build upon and complement all other Government initiatives in this area, avoiding the duplication of efforts. I understand that national stakeholder interest and involvement in this Project has been excellent to date, with participation from a wide cross-section of stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as academia. This is testament to the importance of this national initiative and with your support, has the potential to be transformative for Trinidad and Tobago's business community.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, the Ministry of Trade and Industry remains committed to creating an enabling environment that facilitates and promotes e-commerce, where businesses can thrive, consumers can shop with confidence and innovation can flourish. Together, we must work to harness the potential of e-commerce to ensure growth that is sustainable, inclusive, and beneficial to all.

I wish you a productive Session. Thank you.