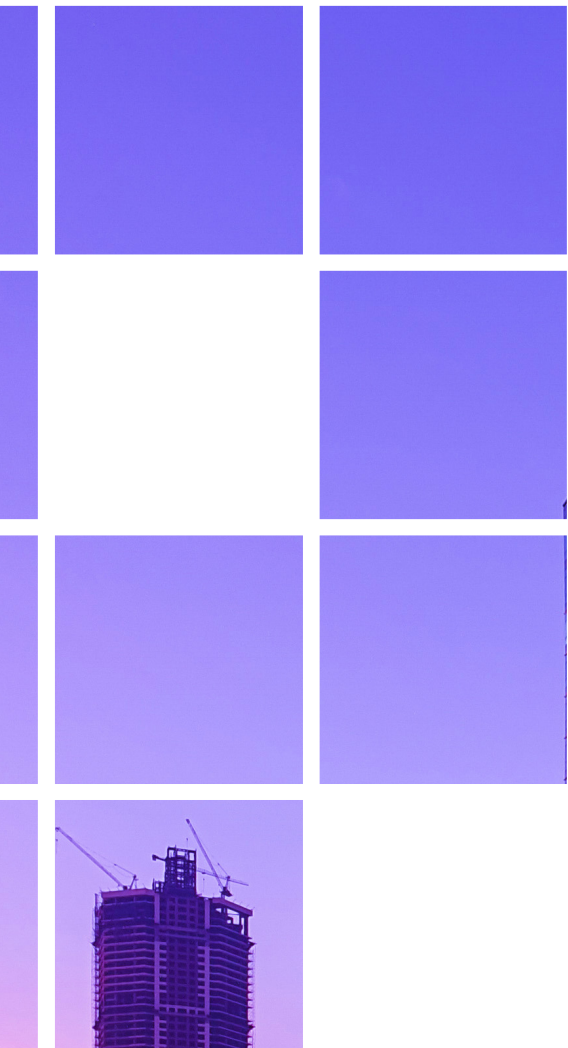




Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Trade and Industry

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT



2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
FOR THE ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT FISCAL 2023
OF THE MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) is the public sector entity responsible for leading and overseeing the implementation of Government's policy for business development, trade, investment and consumer empowerment to facilitate the continued growth of the non-energy sector in which its strategic direction is guided by the "*Trinidad and Tobago's National Development Strategy (NDS) 2016-2030, Vision 2030*". During Fiscal 2023, the MTI and its State Agencies successfully executed a number of initiatives which impacted their performances.

A. Investment and Export Performances of MTI

i. Investment Performance:

Operational Investments:

In Fiscal 2023, the MTI and investTT facilitated investments valued at TT\$264.3 million which became operational across various non-energy sectors: Agriculture; Manufacturing; Agro-processing; Service/Entertainment; ICT; and BPO. LDIs valued at TT\$159.9 million with an estimated one hundred and seventy-eight (178) job opportunities; and FDIs valued at TT\$86.4 million with an estimated three hundred and fifty-one (351) job opportunities in sub sectors of logistics and distribution, manufacturing, warehousing and retail, agriculture and agro-processing.

Closed and Committed Investments:

In Fiscal 2023, MTI and investTT closed seventeen (17) investments valued at TT\$1.5 billion. These investments are expected to generate one thousand, four hundred and fifty-three (1453) job opportunities.

Reinvestments:

During Fiscal 2023, forty (40) major reinvestments were recorded valued at TT\$1.4 billion. These reinvestments are expected to generate at least nine hundred and twenty-three (923) jobs.

Business Process Outsourcing

Trinidad and Tobago has a more recent, yet rapidly growing Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry, which consists of a healthy mix of global service providers and domestic players, serving markets locally, across the Caribbean and throughout North and Latin America.

Several major commercial banks have created shared service centres in Trinidad and Tobago in order to service their operations throughout the Caribbean region, allowing them to reduce costs by creating autonomous business units to process multiple functions such as finance, accounting, procurement and human resources. As at Fiscal 2023, five (5) companies were operating in Trinidad and Tobago with employment opportunities to over one thousand, seven hundred and sixty (1,780) persons

ii. Export Performance:

In Fiscal 2023, total exports for the non-energy sector was valued at TT\$14.8 billion. This showed a decrease by approximately twenty percent (20%) when compared to TT\$18.3 billion in Fiscal 2022. The overall decline in non-energy exports resulted primarily in the Iron and Steel subsector and the Basic Chemicals and Fertilizers subsector.

The Iron and Steel subsector declined by 35% or approximately TT\$2.4 billion in value, moving from TT\$6.8 billion in 2022 to TT\$4.4 billion in 2023. More specifically, within the Iron and Steel subsector, Ferrous Products from Iron Ore Reduction (HS 7203.10.00) accounted for the largest decrease in value by approximately TT\$2.4 billion or 37%, moving from TT\$6.4 billion in 2022 to TT\$4.0 billion in 2023. Under this HS classification, products such as iron pellets and iron rods are exported. The main exporter in Fiscal 2023 being Nu-Iron Ltd who indicated that its operations in 2023 were negatively affected by international market conditions.

The Basic Chemicals and Fertilizers subsector, which includes in the main: Melamine, Oxygen, Solid Sodium Hydroxide, Nitrogen, Argon, Carbon Dioxide and Citric Acid but not including Urea and Anhydrous Ammonia, declined by 49% or approximately TT\$356.8 million in value, moving from TT\$732.4 million in 2022 to TT\$375.6 million in 2023. More specifically, within the Basic Chemicals and Fertilizers subsector, Melamine (HS 2933.61.00) accounted for the largest decrease in value by approximately TT\$390.2 million or 61%, moving from TT\$636.4 million in 2022 to TT\$246.2 million in 2023. The main exporter in Fiscal 2023 being Methanol Holdings Ltd.

Despite this decline, it is to be noted that during this Fiscal period non-energy exports revealed growth in a number of Trinidad and Tobago's products as follows:

Top Non-Energy Products for Fiscal 2023

- Waste and Scrap Iron increased in value by approximately TT\$956 million, moving from TT\$1.2 million in 2022 to TT\$957 million in 2023;
- Cereals increased in value by TT\$63.9 million, moving from TT\$311.8 million in 2022 to TT\$375.7 million in 2023;
- Cigarettes containing Tobacco increased in value by TT\$45.2 million, moving from TT\$226.6 million in 2022 to TT\$271.8 million in 2023;
- Toilet Paper increased in value by TT\$44.8 million, moving from TT\$147.2 million in 2022 to TT\$192.0 million in 2023;
- Non-Alcoholic Beverages increased in value by TT\$41.0 million, moving from TT\$207.2 million in 2022 to TT\$248.3 million in 2023; and
- Plastic Bottles increased in value by TT\$26.1 million, moving from TT\$67.3 million in 2022 to TT\$93.4 million in 2023;

Notably the Food and Beverage sector experienced an overall increase by 9% moving from TT\$2.9 billion to TT\$3.3 billion.

B. Achievement of the MTI's State Agencies

The organisational structure of the MTI is designed to allow for strategic delivery, efficient processes and the achievement of planned outcomes. In this regard, the implementation of the Ministry's policies is primarily facilitated through the work of its State Agencies. The summary of achievements are as follows:

i. exporTT Limited

- **Research and Development Facility (RDF):** In Fiscal 2023, exporTT approved/disbursed funds to companies valued at approximately TT\$1.03 million, these were:
 - Phase I Grants: Feasibility Study: One hundred thousand dollars (TT\$100,000,00) was approved to one (1) company, Nio Digital Limited to conduct a Market Research to determine the feasibility of entering the Central and Eastern European (CEE) market for Apps that offer Software/Business Solutions to SMEs.
 - Phase II Grants: New or Modified Product/Service Development: Approved funding for one (1) company, Decker Petroleum and Marketing Company Ltd, for new and modified product/service developments in the amount of TT\$750,000.00. This project, Plastic into Treasure (P.I.T), introduces a form of technology that is capable of converting plastic waste to a solvent that can be used in the manufacturing of cutback asphalt; and disbursed funds to the following companies from previous Fiscal approvals:
 - Aeon Innovation Solutions Ltd: Online Platform Development - PAN Enterprise Cloud Development and Customer Implementation Consulting (Consulting & Intellectual Property) in the amount of TT\$188,199.00.
 - Cube Root Farms Hydroponics Limited (Indoor Agriculture): Installation of environment systems grow lights and prototypes housing; Construction of hydroponic units for prototypes to grow strawberries, mushrooms and tomatoes; and Installation controls and sensors to monitor prototypes internal

environment, nutrient delivery and light photoperiod in the amount of TT\$7,580.00.

- EIKM Holdings Limited: To make updates to online medical prescription platform. This platform will allow doctors to prescribe medication to patients digitally as well as allow for delivery to the patient in the amount of TT\$720,423.00.
 - Kings Specialties: Product and process development/Improvement of King's Specialty's range of Eggless Cream Liqueurs to achieve improved shelf life, improved product quality, product stability and suitability for the export market in the amount of TT\$16,147.00.
- Phase III Grants: Commercialisation: Approved one (1) new application, Dingole E-Commerce Services Limited for marketing and commercialisation activities related to their "PanJam" VR/AR technology in the amount of TT\$150,000.00; and disbursed funds to Steven Edwards Production for also marketing and commercialisation activities for Distribution Systems Limited in the amount of TT\$94,000.00.
- **Co-Financing Facility:** In Fiscal 2023, TT\$254,416 was disbursed to eleven (11) companies to overcome non-tariff barriers to export which negatively affect market access. Funds were used for website development, shipping of samples, tradeshow participation, and e-Commerce integration.

As a result of the assistance provided, firms comprising the food and beverage, fashion, cleaning and chemical products and game development services sub sectors have generated approximately TT\$669,560.00 (US\$98,464.70) in export sales to the USA, CARICOM, Martinique, Guadeloupe and the United Kingdom.

- **International Certification Fund:** The ICF is designed to assist exporters in achieving international certification in food/beverage and other product compliance to meet the quality and safety standards of international markets and franchises. In Fiscal 2023,

exports generated by all thirteen (13) successful ICF applicants were estimated at a value of US\$1.16M (TT\$7.9M).

- **Tobago Capacity Building Programme:** In Fiscal 2023, the total exports generated through the Tobago Capacity Building Programme were valued at US\$19,000 (TT\$126,000).
- **Export Accelerator Programme:** This programme is designed to improve the export potential of local businesses. Nine (9) companies were able to access new markets - Guyana, Jamaica, Grenada, Dominica and Colombia. Exports generated for Fiscal 2023 through this programme were valued at US\$307,000 (TT\$2.09 million).
- **Labelling and Product Testing Fund:** The Fund provides assistance to exporters for the modification to a product labelling, packaging, appearance, or functionality in order to meet the destination market requirements, consumer preferences, and culture. ExportTT provided approximately TT\$83,108 in financial assistance to four (4) companies from the Household and Industrial Chemicals, Food and Beverage, and Agro-Processing Sub-Sectors to facilitate product testing and improve their product labelling to meet the entry requirements of the USA, Antigua, St. Vincent, Grenada, Barbados, and Dominica. In Fiscal 2023, exports generated by all seven (7) successful applicants since the launch in March 2022 were estimated at US\$13,000 (TT\$88,000).
- **Trade Missions/ Trade Fairs/Trade Shows:** exportTT together with Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) executed eight (8) trade missions during the period November 2022 to September 2023; and facilitated participation of companies in seven (7) trade shows.

More than one hundred and forty (140) small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) took part in trade missions and trade shows. These interactions resulted in more than seven hundred and fifty (750) business-to-business meetings. The total estimated value of export orders stemming from these endeavors amounted to over US\$900,000 (TT\$6,093,000).

- **Fit4Europe II:** This project is geared towards *developing the Export Readiness of Trinidad and Tobago Companies for the European Union (EU) Market - Sweden and Germany.*

This project began in March 2022 and will conclude on September 30, 2024. On August 22 and 23, 2023, exporTT engaged in market dissemination webinars on goods, and services, respectively. Companies were invited to participate in this project under the relevant tiers of Goods and Services: Tier 1 - International and Regional export experience; Tier 2 - Regional export experience; and Tier 3 - MSMEs woman-owned/led or rural-based.

ii. Invest Trinidad and Tobago (investTT)

- **Phoenix Park Industrial Estate (PPIE):** While the PPIE was under construction, investTT closed seventeen (17) investments - fourteen (14) LDIs and three (3) FDIs valued at TT\$442 million, creating approximately eight hundred and fifteen (815) job opportunities as at September 30, 2023. This is inclusive of six (6) in Fiscal 2023 with a total value of over TT\$186 million.
- **Tamana In-Tech Park:** As at September 30, 2023, four (4) investors are at various stages of investment at this Park. iQor, is currently operational (since 2015) with an employment level of 549. iQor intends to employ an additional 900 persons throughout its locations (Tamana, Chaguanas and Barataria) by the end of 2023, supported by the company's shift system. The remaining three (3) investors, with an estimated total value of TT\$13 million and at least thirty-four (34) jobs opportunities, are in advanced stages of discussions with investTT to establish operations at the Park.

iii. Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited (eTeck)

- **Moruga Agro-Processing and Light Industrial Park:** As at September 30, 2023 six (6) closed investments for five (5) factory shells and two (2) land lots with a total investment of TT\$18.4 million, and the creation of approximately one hundred and thirty-four (134) job opportunities. During Fiscal 2023, two (2) companies became operational with a total investment of TT\$7.2 million with an estimated generation of seventy-five (75) job opportunities.
- **Factory Road Industrial Estate** located in Chaguanas, spans sixty-seven (67) acres of land which consists of twelve (12) lots. As at September 30, 2023, nine (9) lots were

leased to eight (8) tenants inclusive of five (5) tenants in Fiscal 2023. It is expected that altogether, the tenants of the Park would be investing an estimated TT\$725.6 million with the creation of over one thousand, one hundred and ninety-one (1191) new jobs. Once works are completed, tenants will proceed with their plans for construction and development.

In August 2023, Town and Country Planning Division and Environment Management Agency granted approval for construction at the Estate. eTeck is currently undertaking infrastructural works for the development of the Park.

- **Magdalena Grand Beach Hotel Upgrade**

The Magdalena Grand Beach and Golf Resort (MGBGR) is a 22-acre oceanfront parcel of land on the windward side of Tobago which currently employs approximately two hundred (200) persons. The hotel has a 178-room capacity (including 22 suites) with an 18-hole golf course; an on-site Spa (leased); 6,000 sq. ft. of Meeting/Convention Space; multiple on-site Restaurants; Tennis Court; multiple Outdoor Swimming Pools; and a Fitness Room.

To ensure that Tobago can be promoted as a prime tourist destination with first-class accommodation, eTeck undertook much needed upgrades and repairs. Some key works that have been completed or are in train include:

- the refurbishment of the north satellite pool; architectural, civil and structural upgrades; mechanical, electrical and plumbing upgrades;
- upgrades to the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system; repairs to the passenger elevators;
- the repairs and purchase of furniture, fixtures and equipment to a total of 40 rooms throughout the hotel in preparation of international events, including the Caribbean Classic Golf Tournament in July 2023 and the Commonwealth Youth Games in August 2023, where the Magdalena was the location for the Commonwealth Village in Tobago; and
- Upgrade and refurbishment of the Golf Course.

iv. **Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS)**

- **National Programme for the Accreditation of all Public Laboratories:** In March 2022 Two (2) laboratories, from the first call, Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA); and Trinidad and Tobago National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited (NP) were fully accredited, on November 9, 2022 and December 14, 2022, respectively. This enabled accreditation, which is consistent with the requirements of the international standard, ISO/IEC 17025 - *General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories*. This standard is useful for any organisation that performs testing, sampling or calibration and wants to demonstrate that it can produce consistent and trustworthy results.

A second call for new projects opened in February 2023 in which TTBS received applications from two testing laboratories and one medical laboratory.

- **Inaugural National Quality Awards (NQA) Programme** was launched on March 15, 2023 under four categories: i) Manufacturing ii) Services iii) SMEs and iv) Agriculture and Agro processing. This project aims to develop National Quality Award (NQA) programmes in member states with the rationale to recognise firms that have implemented quality management practices within their organisations. In the execution of the NQA programme, twenty (20) applications were received and eleven (11) satisfied the eligibility requirements. Audits began in September 2023.
- **Advancing the National Metrology System for Trinidad and Tobago:** Metrology Quantities of Goods Regulations Implementation: Net content verification of prepacked goods commenced in September 2023 with a focus on the main food staples to ensure consumers receive value for money. Some of the products to be verified include rice, flour, cooking oil, sugar, salt, split peas, powdered milk and powdered laundry detergent. The Legal Metrology Inspectorate (LMI) would have tested over twenty (20) different brands of rice of varying sizes. Most of the brands met the requirements. Where there were deficiencies, TTBS met with the supplier/s for corrective action. A new commodity will be tested every quarter.

v. **Trinidad and Tobago Fair Trading Commission (TTFTC)**

The Trinidad and Tobago Fair Trading Commission (TTFTC) promoted the implementation of the Fair Trading Act in accordance with its mandate to maintain, promote and protect competition. TTFTC engaged in advocacy through webinars; addressed topical issues relating to anti-competitive business practices; and in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Technical Cooperation: Strengthening of the Competition Policy Framework has completed and published the Guide to the Fair Trading Act in April 2023. This Guide helps both the consumers and the business community understand the main provisions of the Fair Trading Act. It also ensures all enterprises are made aware of their responsibilities and consumers and businesses are protected from anti-competitive activity and exploitative abuses of market power.

vi. **Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company Limited (CreativeTT)**

- **FashionTT:**

- **Value Chain Investment Programme (VCIP):** FashionTT, through the VCIP, provided support and mentorship to eligible local designers aimed at improving the value chain and international competitiveness. The VCIP consists of four (4) tiers in which the top tier, the Global Value Chain (GVC), is designed to support export-oriented activities of local designers. In June 2023 six (6) GVC level designers participated in an In-Market Trade Mission to New York. One (1) designer - Keegan Simon of 1individual Aesthetic gained interests and has fulfilled an initial order in the amount of US\$1,500. 1individual Aesthetic is also in the process of fulfilling orders in two (2) other Brooklyn-based brick and mortar stores; and an international online selling platform in addition to its three (3) in-store locations. Two (2) other designers - Charu Lochan Dass of CLD and Adiola Monsegue of Genesis Swimwear were accepted to feature their products in a brick and mortar which was launched in Brooklyn.

- **The Fashion LookBook** is a quarterly publication by FashionTT that showcases local fashion brands. Three (3) editions were published in Fiscal 2023 - the seventh, eighth and ninth editions which featured twenty-six (26), twenty-five (25) and eleven (11) designers, respectively and were distributed globally to embassies and consulates

with a view of attracting customers locally, regionally and internationally. The FashionTT LookBook Webpage was promoted via Google Ads and Social Media Boosts. As at September 30, 2023, this promotion generated approximately fourteen (14) million views from consumers throughout the Caribbean, Canada, the United Kingdom, Nigeria and the United States.

- **MusicTT:**

- **Live Music District:** In Fiscal 2023, MusicTT partnered with thirty-six (36) events which in turn saw a total of five hundred and fifty-one (551) artistes with four hundred and thirteen (413) unique performers for which jobs were created. An average of one hundred and thirty-eight (138) artistes were contracted on two (2) or more occasions.
- **RVRB Experience Music Conference:** RVRB (reverb) eXperience (RVRB X) is a music business conference aimed at facilitating business-to-business connections, capacity building and networking towards possible export opportunities and collaborations for the music industry. Since its launch in 2021, the RVRB X has facilitated ninety-four (94) musical performances, one hundred and forty-nine (149) speakers, seventy (70) sessions and approximately 420,000 online viewers from sixty-one (61) countries. It has also created sixty (60) job opportunities for a mix of sole traders and Limited Liability Companies in fields across the media and entertainment sector.
- **Gospel Music Awards Trinidad and Tobago (GMATT):** The Celian Group together with MusicTT and the MTI launched the GMATT (which formed part of the Gospel Fest weekend) in April 2023. MusicTT's involvement with the gospel music locally helped boost production for this sector by ten percent (10%). This is also evident through the increase of GMATT nominations by 25%. Through MusicTT, the GMATT was also advertised via the official STELLAR Awards Facebook community group bringing awareness to international audiences. The STELLAR Awards is the largest gospel music awards in North America, which has been televised for thirty-nine (39) years to date. Their endorsement encourages tourism and can open doors to collaborations for artistes which can lead to increased fan bases, and employment generation. It can also be a source of mentorship to the GMATT team.

- **FilmTT**
- **Trinidad and Tobago Locations: Unseen, Unexpected:** In Fiscal 2023, FilmTT hosted thirteen (13) international productions which created one hundred and seventy (170) employment opportunities and generated approximately TT\$2,006,966.24 million in revenue.
- **Nigerian Producers Exchange - Script to Screen Programme with James Amuta:** Script to Screen with James Amuta, a renowned Nigerian filmmaker, provided aspiring local filmmakers with a comprehensive training program, spanning from scriptwriting to the practical aspects of filmmaking. Under his guidance, participants were taken through an intensive virtual workshop during May 17, 2023 to June 5, 2023. The programme included screenwriting, cinematography and directing. After the successful completion of the virtual workshop, thirty (30) short films and twenty-eight (28) scripts were created. Participants were given a unique opportunity to put their newly acquired skills into practice through hands-on filming experience with Mr. Amuta by filming a short teaser film, '*When The Monsters Come Out*', and '*A Mother's Revenge*' which were submitted to the Toronto International Film Festival's marketplace. This programme in addition to the filming of these projects upskilled fifty-two (52) industry professionals and generated forty-three (43) employment opportunities.
- **Script to Screen Programme:** FilmTT implemented an incubator programme for five (5) film screenwriters titled "*On Set*". This programme requires the screenwriter to create a five (5) episode television sitcom in collaboration with TTT. One of the five (5) screenwriters was selected for production. This TV series, a local Situational Comedy (Sitcom) entitled *Mixed Up*, was red carpet premiered in June 2023 and aired on TTT on September 25, 2023. The series utilised 100% local talent which was led by renowned playwright Richard Ragoobarsingh. The production resulted in significant direct and indirect employment opportunities for various skilled professionals such as carpenters, painters, set designers, wardrobe stylists, hair and makeup artists. In a post-premiere marathon event, the estimated viewership of the series on TTT Limited was 31,410 households, which included terrestrial viewers and those watching the Live TV stream. This programme yielded a favourable influence on GDP. For example, the production designer for *Mixed Up*, opened one (1) storefront stemming from the

training and insight gained, and generated employment for four (4) individuals for small events and between ten (10) and fifteen (15) individuals for larger events at Obsessive Designs, located at Roopnarine Complex, Caroni Savannah Road, Chaguanas.

- **Promotion of Trinidad and Tobago as a Film Friendly Destination:** Five (5) Filmmakers from Trinidad and Tobago attended the British Film Institute Networking event in London, United Kingdom (UK) on October 9, 2023. Filmmakers networked with producers and distributors from the UK, Nigeria, France and Dominican Republic. Four (4) producers obtained networking opportunities through this event. One (1) filmmaker secured £35,000 from the British Film Institute for the production and premiere of their short film '*Trinidad Remains*' which generated thirty-two (32) employment opportunities. Another team consisting of two (2) of the filmmakers, successfully produced a teaser, '*Maria*', which has been generating positive social media reviews.

C. Other Achievements of the MTI

The MTI directly supported the establishment, operation and expansion of businesses in targeted sectors and executed strategic initiatives to improve the business environment and ability of local firms to sustainably produce goods and services at competitive prices and high quality. In this regard, some of the main achievements recorded were as follows:

- **Grant Fund Facility (GFF):** In Fiscal 2023, eight (8) SMEs benefitted from grant funding valued at TT\$1.8 million which have resulted in accumulative investment of approximately TT\$4 million with an estimated sixty (60) job opportunities. The categories for disbursement were in the following sub-sectors:
 - Food and drink processing, including agro-processing products (3);
 - Manufacturing of textile, garments, footwear and headwear (1);
 - Manufacturing of construction materials (2);
 - Manufacturing of beauty and personal care products (1); and
 - Manufacturing of chemical products including cleaning items (1).

The funding has enabled several of the beneficiaries to penetrate new export markets, including CARICOM countries, Canada, the United States of America, the United

Kingdom, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Some of these projects are expected to facilitate further exports in the medium-term to non-traditional markets such as the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Germany, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica and Chile.

- **Expansion of the Steelpan Manufacturing Grant Fund Facility:** On June 16, 2023, Cabinet agreed to the expansion of the Steelpan Manufacturing Grant Fund Facility to cover funding assistance for eligible applicants to attend both local and foreign trade shows, as well as the establishment of an online presence in reputable online market places. Cabinet also agreed to the establishment of a Steering Committee for the Development of a National Governance Framework for the Industry. Letters of appointment were issued to Members of the Committee.
- **Grant Facility for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in the Yachting Sector:** This initiative was launched in March 2022 for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) within the Yachting Sector in the amount of TT\$10 million, to finance eligible business costs. In Fiscal 2023, twenty-five (25) applications were approved in the amount of TT\$406,132.51. Sixteen (16) applicants have received funds in the amount TT\$267,138.06.
- **Apprenticeship Programme for the Non-energy Manufacturing Sector in Trinidad and Tobago:** The MTI in collaboration with the MIC Institute of Technology (MIC-IT), the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) and the National Training Agency of Trinidad and Tobago (NTA) developed a three-year Programme to build human resource capacity within the manufacturing sector and address shortages of skilled labour. Cohort 1 completed its first year of the 3-year programme in May 2023; and Cohort 2 year 1 commenced on June 20, 2023 with an enrolment of one hundred (100) trainees. On completion of the programme, over three hundred (300) graduates will be equipped with the necessary skills to fill existing and future vacancies within the manufacturing sector.
- **Apprenticeship Programme for the Wood and Wood Related Products Manufacturing Sub-sector,** launched on August 16, 2022, was developed in collaboration with MIC-IT, the TTMA and the NTA to address skills gaps and fill existing vacancies within the wood and wood related products manufacturing sub sector. The two-year programme commenced in November 2022 in three (3) areas; Carpentry,

Woodworking and Joinery Technology with fifty (50) apprentices. The programme is expected to conclude in November 2024.

- **National SheTrades Hub:** This initiative aims to empower female-led businesses by connecting them with opportunities to grow and enhance their businesses. The Hub has over seven hundred (700) registered local women-owned businesses on the platform and several of them engaged in the following:
 - Seventeen (17) women participated in the Trade and Investment Convention (TIC), attended business-to-business meetings and capacity building seminars. As a result of the exposure received, these women networked with other women on the Hub to secure a spot at TIC 2024 which will be self-funded.
 - Export Centers Company Limited Christmas Craft Market: Twenty-nine (29) women (nineteen (19) from Trinidad and ten (10) from Tobago) took part in this event and were able to sell their goods at the market.
 - MTI hosted a SheTrades International Women’s Day networking event at the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Center on March 8, 2023. This was attended by over 400 women.
 - Three (3) companies - Handmade by Jeanette Company; Pinkberri Kosmetique; and Christique Clothing participated in a Trade Mission to St. Lucia in August 2023. Handmade by Jeanette received orders of five hundred (500) cases each for two (2) of the company’s products – chocolate steak sauce; and chocolate steak salt of two (2) sizes 150ml and 50ml.
 - One hundred and six (106) women trained in areas of Export Planning, Export Readiness and in Identifying and Assessing Export Markets.

- **Establishment of Commercial Offices/Appointment of Commercial Attachés:** In August 2022, Cabinet approved the establishment of commercial offices in Panama, United States of America and the United Kingdom; and the appointment of Commercial Attachés in China, Guyana, Jamaica and South Africa. The main focus of the Attachés will be to boost exports, assist in diversifying export markets and promote inward investment. This will be done through identifying export opportunities, providing timely market intelligence and efficient logistical support as well as real-time information on challenges and opportunities in the respective markets. In July 2023, three (3) Commercial Officers

were appointed to Panama, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America; and two (2) Commercial Attachés were appointed to Guyana and Jamaica, respectively. These placements to the various countries which took place in Fiscal 2024.

- **Establishment of the Trade and Investment Promotion Agency:** In an effort to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure a targeted approach to trade and investment promotion, the MTI commenced the establishment of a single Trade and Investment Promotion Agency. The MTI has begun to execute the necessary statutory requirements for the amalgamation of the operations of InvestTT, ExporTT and CreativeTT into the new single Agency. The valuation of the entities; Assessment Report on the existing HR capacity of entities; and Draft Change Management and Communication Plan have been completed.
- **Trinidad and Tobago-Chile Partial Scope Trade Agreement:** Trinidad and Tobago and Chile signed a General Framework Agreement for the negotiation of a Partial Scope Trade Agreement (PSTA) on October 20, 2020 with the aim to increase trade between the two (2) countries by providing market access at reduced rates of duty, on a list of products. The Third and Fourth Rounds of negotiations concluded in December 2022 and June 2023, respectively. The Fifth Round is expected to be completed in June 2024.
- **Trinidad and Tobago-Curaçao Partial Scope Trade Agreement:** On September 17, 2022 Trinidad and Tobago and Curaçao agreed to the General Framework Agreement for negotiation for a Partial Scope Trade Agreement. Discussions on the timeline for the negotiations and trade disciplines to be covered under the PSTA were held in August 2023. The First Round of Negotiations is scheduled for July 2024.
- **CARICOM-Colombia Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement:** CARICOM and Colombia exchanged offers on August 5, 2022 in preparation for the Second Round of negotiations to be held in Colombia. Trinidad and Tobago's Initial Offer of products, approved by Cabinet on July 13, 2023, was submitted to the CARICOM Secretariat on July 21, 2023. Preparations are ongoing for the Second Round of Negotiations carded for Fiscal 2024.

- **Trinidad and Tobago-Ghana Bilateral Investment Treaty:** Cabinet previously agreed, *inter alia*, that Trinidad and Tobago enter into negotiations for a Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investment Agreement (RPPIA), also known as a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) with Ghana, to encourage trade and investment. A negotiation team was formed and comprised officials from the MTI, the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and the Solicitor General's Department of the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs (AGLA) with the MTI as Chair. The First Round of negotiations was held virtually during the period May 23-25, 2023. During the First Round, the Delegations conducted a review of the first 12 of 25 Articles of the text in addition to the Title and Preambular paragraphs. Negotiations have since been completed in May 2024.

- **Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED):** Trinidad and Tobago's participation at COTED ensures that national interests are reflected in the regional trade policy development, and necessary approvals are secured for national policy implementation. In Fiscal 2023 the following activities were achieved:

 - On January 1, 2023, the suspension of the Common External Tariff (CET) was extended for twenty (20) basic food items including dried salted pollock fillets, other Cheese (Cheddar), other black tea (fermented), other partly fermented tea, canned corn beef, canned herrings, canned sardines, canned tuna, canned mackerel, active yeasts, all edible preparations for infant use, other (Soya Bean Oil), virgin olive oil, other: Sunflower-seed or safflower oil and fractions thereof, Canola Oil, frozen french fries, refined sugar, powdered milks: in powder, granules or other solid forms, of a fat content, by weight not exceeding 1.5%; and in powder, granules or other solid forms, of a fat content, by weight exceeding 1.5%, not containing added sugar or other sweetening matter, other powdered milks. The suspension of the CET was also extended to non-alloy steel, sulphonic acid and audio compact disc, selected personal protective equipment, road paving materials and petroleum products such as motor spirits and hydraulic brakes fluid. The suspension of the CET on these items allows Trinidad and Tobago to reduce the customs duties charged on items, resulting in reduced cost for inputs for manufacturers and lowered prices for consumers.

Moreover, in May 2023, the suspension of the CET was implemented on a list of over three thousand (3,000) pharmaceutical items for treating ailments of communicable and non-communicable diseases including pains, cold and flu, cancers, chronic disease and neurological disorders.

Additionally, during Fiscal 2023 the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) provided support to the local cement industry. The rate of duty on Other Hydraulic Cement (HS 2523.90.00) was increased from a rate of duty of 5% to 20% for the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023. It also implemented an Import Licensing Regime and the maintenance of the Quota ceiling of 150,000 tonnes allowed for HS 2523.29.10 – Building Cement (Grey) and HS 2523.90.00 - Other Hydraulic Cement.

Trinidad and Tobago also obtained an alteration of the CET on Chlorine Gas from 0%-10%, as it was able to demonstrate that the country's production satisfied 75% of regional demand which qualified the product for a protective rate of duty against products imported from extra-regional sources.

- **Ease of Doing Business:**

- Enhance e-Services:

TTBizLink, which is accessed via www.ttbizlink.gov.tt, continued to simplify the processes and procedures when doing business in the country. In Fiscal 2022, TTBizlink facilitated a number of trade and business-related e-services which further reduced the standard processing time.

One such key e-service was the launch of the Trinidad and Tobago Trade and Business Information Portal in May 2022. It is a central repository for all regulatory information related to investment, trade and business facilitation required by traders and businesses. As at September 30, 2023, the portal has attracted a total 146,342 unique visitors and 521,792 total visits from one hundred and sixty-six (166) countries.

Moreover, the MTI launched the Enhanced TTBizLink Application Software on July 17, 2023. This included the enhancement of the thirty-six (36) existing services across

seven (7) Ministries, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, and exportTT.

- Automated Construction Permitting System ACPS (DevelopTT): In Fiscal 2023, the WASA module of the Planning permission e-service was launched in Tobago; distributed all remaining equipment procured for DevelopTT to Tobago agencies; and implemented the function allowing all agencies the capacity to edit and preview content of the decision letters generated by the system.
- **Scrap Metal Policy for Trinidad and Tobago 2022-2027:** In May 2023, the Scrap Metal Act, 2022, with the exception of Section 3(1), and Scrap Metal Regulations 2023 were proclaimed and came into effect. The Scrap Metal Act, 2022 repeals and replaces the Old Metal and Marine Stores Act. The Act introduces, *inter alia*, a new licensing regime for Dealers and Collectors of Scrap Metal; strengthens the regulation of the Scrap Metal Industry and allows for greater enforcement by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS).
- **Combat Illicit Trade in Consumer Goods in Trinidad and Tobago:** The Anti-Illicit Trade Task Force (AITTF), with responsibility for implementing the objectives of the National Action Plan to combat illicit trade in consumer goods in Trinidad and Tobago completed the Illicit Trade Awareness Campaign- Phase 1 and reviewed existing legislation relative to combating illicit trade.
- **New Special Economic Zones (SEZ):** During Fiscal 2023, the MTI continued to work with the Chief Parliamentary Counsel of the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance to finalise the SEZ Regulations and the Incentives Framework, while the Board of the SEZ Authority continued to work for the creation of a robust and effective regulatory authority.
- **Manufacturing Tax Credit:** To further incentivize and create a more agile and robust manufacturing sector, the Minister of Finance, in the Fiscal 2023 National Budget introduced a one-time manufacturing tax credit. This incentive targeted companies which invest in new machinery, production lines and equipment in the year 2023. This

manufacturing tax credit, which is up to a maximum of TT\$50,0000.00, can be utilised against the corporation tax liability of the approved manufacturing company, certified by the Ministry with the responsibility for Trade and Industry. This incentive was legislated via the Finance (No. 2) Act, 2022 and was effective from 1st January, 2023. Sixteen (16) persons expressed interest for the Manufacturing Tax Credit and the MTI received two (2) applications from the Food and Drink Processing; and Printing and Publishing sub sectors which are being processed.

- **Consumer Affairs Division (CAD)** plans and executes the consumer guidance, protection and empowerment initiatives of the MTI in order to contribute to a fair business environment. In Fiscal 2023, six hundred and eighty-seven (687) cases were reported of which CAD resolved six hundred and forty-two (642) and responded to three thousand, one hundred and twenty (3120) enquiries. The resolution of redress in monetary terms for consumers was two million, one hundred and fifteen thousand, three hundred and sixty-six dollars (\$2,115, 366.46) which entailed either exchange of goods, repairs, full refund, partial refund and credit notes.

D. MTI's Financial Performance

At the end of Fiscal 2022/2023, the MTI's **Development Programme Expenditure** to Release by the MOF totalled \$158,339,485 (92%) and MTI's Development Programme Expenditure to Revised Allocation totalled \$57,798,465 (73%) towards the achievements of its projects: Consolidated Fund Expenditure to Release by MOF totalled \$53,525,694 (88%), and Consolidated Fund Expenditure to Revised Allocation totalled \$49,621,256 (52%); and Infrastructural Development Fund (IDF) to Release by MOF totalled \$104,813,791 (94%), and IDF Expenditure to Revised Allocation totalled \$8,177,209.00 (93%).

At the end of Fiscal 2022/2023 **Recurrent Expenditure** of the Overseas Market Promotion – Local Manufacturers (Export Booster Initiative Programme) of the MTI through exporTT to Release totalled \$3,453,787.04 (100%), and EBI Expenditure to Revised Allocation totalled \$2,546,212.96 (57.6%).

E. Public and Community Relations

Senator the Honourable Minister of Trade and Industry engaged in numerous public and community relations activities to bring/increase awareness and understanding on key initiatives of the MTI.

F. The Way Forward

The MTI will continue to develop and execute policy initiatives approved by Cabinet and will also seek to execute initiatives designed to support the achievement of its mandate for business, trade, investment and consumer empowerment.

Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI)
Annual Administrative Report for Fiscal 2023

Contents

1.0	Introduction	24
2.0	MTI Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives	25
3.0	Organisational Structure	26
4.0	Policy and Development Initiatives	32
4.1	<i>Support for Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises.....</i>	<i>33</i>
4.2	<i>Deepening and Expansion of Trinidad and Tobago’s Trading Relationship.....</i>	<i>46</i>
4.3	<i>Export Performance.....</i>	<i>50</i>
4.4	<i>Implementation of the National Quality Infrastructure Enhancement Programme.....</i>	<i>52</i>
4.5	<i>Support for the Creative Industries.....</i>	<i>57</i>
4.6	<i>Maritime and Leisure Marine Sectors.....</i>	<i>63</i>
4.7	<i>Implementation of Business Environment Reforms.....</i>	<i>63</i>
5.7	<i>Implementation of the Fair Trading Act through the Fair Trading Commission.....</i>	<i>69</i>
5.8	<i>Building Economic Infrastructure and Securing Investments.....</i>	<i>71</i>
5.9	<i>Protection and Empowerment of Consumers.....</i>	<i>77</i>
5.10	<i>Transformed Ministry Performance and Service Delivery</i>	<i>81</i>
6.0	Financial Operations	83
7.0	Human Resource Capital	90
8.0	Public and Community Relations	91
9.0	The Way Forward	101
10.0	Conclusion	104

1.0 Introduction

The Annual Administrative Report outlines the performance of the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) during Fiscal 2022/2023 as articulated in its Annual Work Plan for Fiscal 2023 which is aligned to the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) Roadmap to Recovery Framework.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) is responsible for leading and overseeing the implementation of Government's policy for business development, trade promotion, investment facilitation and consumer empowerment in Trinidad and Tobago.

In this regard, in Fiscal 2023, the MTI and invesTT facilitated investments valued at TT\$264.3 million which became operational across various non-energy sectors creating over five hundred (500) job opportunities. Additionally, the MTI was able to successfully achieve key results in the implementation of its initiatives. Results such as improvements to the ease of doing business and legislative framework for investment and trade; the growth of the manufacturing sector through the implementation of incentives such as the Grant Fund Facility (GFF) to firms operating in the Manufacturing, Agriculture and Agro-processing, Financial Services, Maritime Services, Aviation Services, Fish and Fish Processing, Software Design and Application; and Creative Industries, manufacturing tax credit; GFF for Micro and Small Enterprises in the yachting sector; secured investments through the development and expansion of economic infrastructure; and implemented measures to combat illicit trade in consumer goods in Trinidad and Tobago.

2.0 MTI Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives

2.1 Vision of MTI

“A dynamic, client-oriented organization delivering integrated, quality services for business growth, trade and investment expansion and consumer empowerment”

2.2 Mission of MTI

“To work as an innovative team, championing business growth, trade and investment for enhanced global competitiveness and promoting consumer interests for improved well-being”

2.3 Strategic Objectives

The MTI’s strategic objectives are guided by Pillar 1: Diversifying and Transforming the Economy under the Phase 2 Report of the Roadmap for Trinidad and Tobago: Transforming to a New Economy and a New Society, together with its Annual Work Plan for Fiscal 2022/2023

3.0 Organisational Structure

3.1 Organisational Profile

The MTI is the official public sector entity responsible for leading and overseeing implementation of Government's policy for trade facilitation, investment promotion, business development and consumer empowerment. The responsibilities as listed in the Trinidad and Tobago Gazette of September 9, 2020, are as follows:

Commerce

- Anti-Dumping
- Competition Policy

Consumer Affairs

- Consumer Empowerment
- Consumer Protection
- Consumer Research

e-Commerce

Export Processing Zones

Incubating Local Industries

Industrial Parks

Industry

Metrology

Product Information

Product Quality Development

Technology Park

Trade

- Trade Agreements
- Trade Policy

3.2 Organisational Structure

The MTI's broad organizational structure is organised as follows:

1. Minister's Office;
2. Office of the Permanent Secretary;
3. Core Directorates;
4. Support Units; and
5. State Agencies.

Minister's Office

The Minister of Trade and Industry has responsibility for defining the overarching policy framework for guiding Trinidad and Tobago's non-energy business development, trade facilitation, investment promotion and consumer empowerment initiatives in line with the overall policy framework of the Government.

Office of the Permanent Secretary (OPS)

The OPS is responsible for the executive management of the MTI and its achievement of defined goals and objectives. The Office generally consists of the Permanent Secretary, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Senior Managerial Personnel and support staff. The Permanent Secretary is the accounting officer of the Ministry with overall responsibility for the routine activities of the MTI. A Deputy Permanent Secretary has also been assigned to the Ministry to provide technical support to the OPS.

Core Directorates:

The MTI has five (5) directorates. The Directorates are core portfolio areas of the MTI with main responsibility for formulating policy, developing strategies and ensuring execution of the mandate of the MTI. They are as follows:

- i. **Trade Directorate (TD)** - The role of the Trade Directorate is to formulate and develop trade policy, briefs and strategies for the planning and execution of the Ministry's trade portfolio in order to contribute to the country's macroeconomic trade performance measures. The Directorate is also responsible for negotiating trade agreements designed to improve market access for manufacturers and service providers.
- ii. **Business Development Directorate (BDD)** – The role of the BDD is to plan and execute the business development portfolio of the MTI in order to contribute to the country's macroeconomic business development performance measures.
- iii. **Investment Directorate (ID)** – The role of the Investment Directorate is to formulate and implement the investment portfolio of the Ministry in order to contribute to the country's macroeconomic investment performance measures.

- iv. **Policy and Strategy Directorate (PSD)** – The Policy and Strategy Directorate (PSD) provides strategic planning, policy development, coordination functions for the Ministry and the monitoring and evaluation of projects to ensure evidence-based decision making across the Ministry and its Agencies. Through project management services, the PSD also ensures the efficient mobilisation of resources and execution of strategic projects such as the Single Electronic Window (SEW).
- v. **Consumer Affairs Division (CAD)** – The Consumer Affairs Division plans and executes the guidance, protection and empowerment initiatives of the Ministry in order to contribute to a fair business environment for consumers.
- vi. **Fair Trading Unit (FTU)** – The Fair Trading Unit ensures that the business environment is fair and free from uncompetitive business practices which hinder growth and development.
- vii. **Trade Licence Unit** – The Trade Licence Unit regulates the import and export of certain goods in accordance with applicable laws and Government policy.

Support Units

The Support Units provide essential services to the core directorates and the overall MTI.

The Support Units are as follows:

- i. **Accounting Unit (AU)** - oversees and coordinates all financial operations of the MTI. The Unit ensures that accurate financial information is reported in a timely manner.
- ii. **Corporate Communications and Events Management Unit (CC&EMU)** - provides information to key internal and external stakeholders on a timely basis. The Unit also enhances the MTI's corporate image and manages the MTI's relationship with key stakeholders.
- iii. **Corporate Services Unit (CSU)** – provides office management, procurement and facilities management services.

- iv. **Legal Unit (LU)** – provides legal advice and support to the MTI.
- v. **Human Resource Unit (HRU)** – manages the recruitment and development of the human capital of the MTI.
- vi. **Information Management and Support Unit (IM&SU)** - provides technical and network support services to the MTI. The department is also responsible for transforming the MTI through information and communication technology.
- vii. **Internal Audit Unit (IAU)** - ensures conformity of the MTI with financial rules and regulations, instructions, policies and contract plans.

State Agencies

The implementation of the Ministry's policies is primarily facilitated through the work of its state agencies. The various state agencies under the remit of the MTI and their roles, responsibilities and services provided are outlined below:

- i. **Statutory Boards and Other Bodies:**
 - a. **Betting Levy Board (BLB)** develops and promotes horse and dog racing, including the breeding of racehorses and dogs in the country. The BLB manages the remuneration and benefits for jockeys, stable lads and monitors compliance with any rules relating to the operation of pool betting offices and pool betting outlets, including their opening and closing hours. The Betting Levy Board is governed by the Betting Levy Board Act No. 35 of 1989 which came into force on November 15, 1989. It has since been amended by Act No. 31 of 1991, and the Finance Act No. 5 of 1995.
 - b. **Fair Trading Commission (FTC)** is an independent statutory body responsible for implementing the Fair Trading Act in Trinidad and Tobago. The main objectives are to promote and maintain effective competition throughout the economy, and to ensure that competition is not distorted, restricted or prevented, either by private business conduct or by public policy.

- c. **Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS)** is a corporate body established on July 8th, 1974 and governed by the Standards Act No. 18 of 1997. The TTBS has a statutory responsibility to promote and encourage the development and maintenance of standards for the improvement of goods produced or used in Trinidad and Tobago (except food, drugs and cosmetics).
 - d. **Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority (TTRA)** regulates and controls racing and the operation of race courses in the country. As such, the Racing Authority plays a critical role in the administration of Horse Racing, in particular, in ensuring that the integrity of the sport is upheld.
- ii. **Wholly-owned Enterprises:**
- a. **Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited (eTeck)** manages and optimizes the use of its existing industrial parks on a commercial basis and develops and improves the infrastructure and operations of new modern economic zones through, *inter alia*, public private partnerships that can expand and diversify Trinidad and Tobago's economic base. The Company also manages the assets of the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre and the Magdalena Grand Beach and Golf Resort.
 - b. **Invest Trinidad and Tobago (investTT)** acts as a "one-stop-shop" for investors ensuring that they are provided with all the knowledge, networks and contacts needed to facilitate new investment opportunities in Trinidad and Tobago.
 - c. **Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company Limited (CreativeTT)** stimulates and facilitates the business development and export activities of the Creative Industries in Trinidad and Tobago in order to generate national wealth. The Company is responsible for the strategic development of three (3) niche sub-sectors under its purview, namely, Music, Film and Fashion.
 - d. **Trinidad and Tobago Free Zones Company Limited (TTFZ)** is governed by The Trinidad and Tobago Free Zones Act Chapter 81:07 and is responsible for the operation of Free Zones in Trinidad and Tobago.

iii. **Majority Owned Enterprises:**

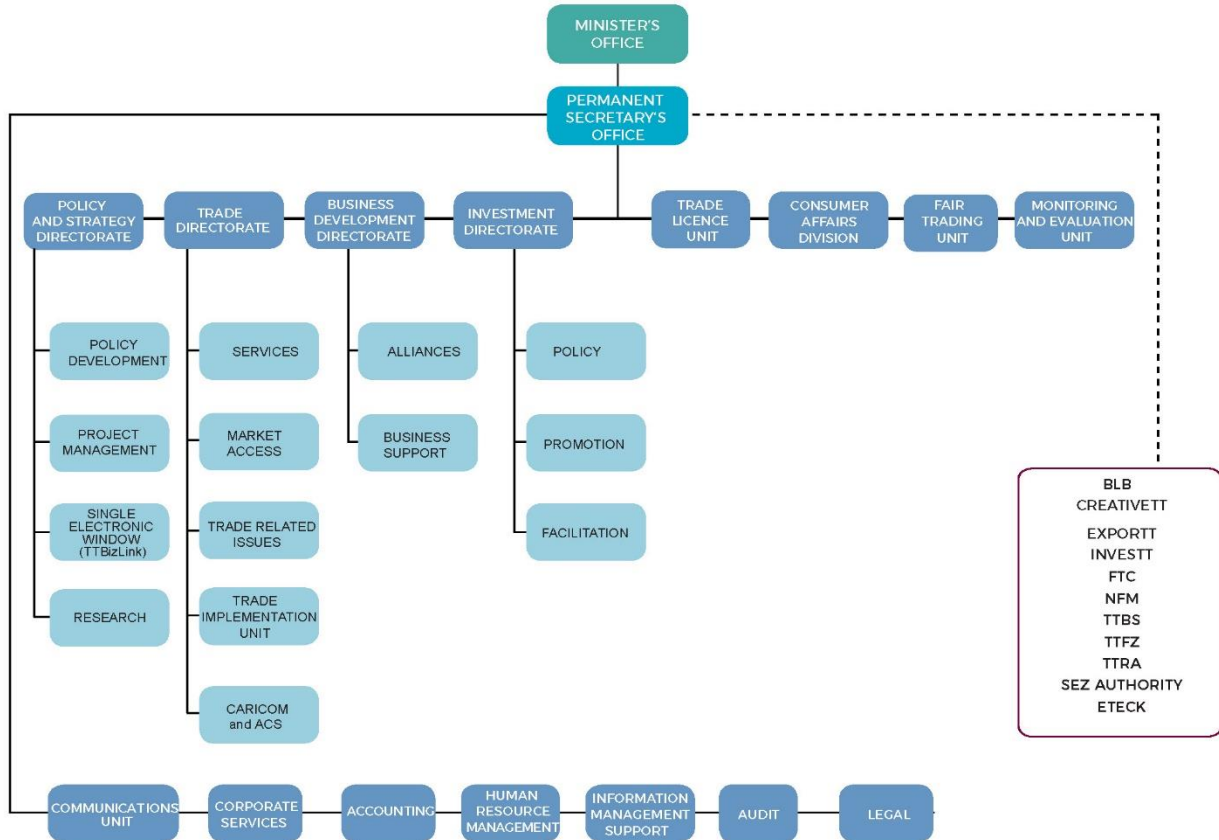
The National Export Facilitation Organisation of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (exporTT). Its mandate is to generate export growth and diversification in the goods and services sectors.

iv. **Indirectly Owned Enterprises:**

National Flour Mills Limited (NFM) is a local manufacturer in Trinidad and Tobago producing flour and feed products. The Company commenced trading activities in 1966 and has grown to provide services such as flour milling, rice milling, animal feed production, dry mix blending and packaging. NFM is a publicly traded Company and is partly owned by the GORTT.

The following diagram outlines the current Organisational Structure of the MTI:

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



4.0 Policy and Development Initiatives

In an effort to continue the diversification and transformation of the non-energy sector, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) remained steadfast during Fiscal 2023 in pursuing its short to medium term measures articulated in its Annual Work Plan for the realisation of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) policy agenda and to ensure the overall success of MTI together with its State Agencies' sectors' strategies. The results of each measure are highlighted hereunder.

4.1 Support for Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

To support the establishment, operation and expansion of businesses in certain sectors, the MTI during Fiscal 2023, implemented targeted strategic initiatives that would impact the business environment and ability of firms to sustainably produce goods and services at competitive prices and quality, as identified below:

4.1.1 Grant Fund Facility

The Grant Fund Facility (GFF), launched in 2017, provides funding of 50%, up to TT\$250,000.00 per applicant for the acquisition of new machinery and equipment, technology/software and tools. Firms operating in the Manufacturing, Agriculture and Agro-processing, Financial Services, Maritime Services, Aviation Services, Fish and Fish Processing, Software Design and Application; and Creative Industries are eligible for funding under the GFF. Areas excluded for this funding are working capital and land and building costs including leasing.

Since the launch of the GFF, thirty-three (33) small and medium enterprises (SMEs) benefitted from grant funding valued at TT\$7.08 million in the following sub-sectors:

- Printing and publishing (1);
- Cocoa processing including the manufacture of chocolate (3);
- Food and drink processing, including agro-processing products (12);
- Manufacturing of packaging materials (3);
- Fish processing (1);
- Manufacturing of textile, garments, footwear and headwear (3);
- Manufacturing of construction materials (2);

- Manufacturing of beauty and personal care products (2);
- Manufacturing of chemical products including cleaning items (4);
- Software designs and applications (1); and
- Financial Services- Business Process Outsourcing (1).

In Fiscal 2023, eight (8) SMEs benefitted from grant funding valued at TT\$1.8 million which have resulted in accumulative investment of approximately TT\$4 million with an estimated sixty (60) job opportunities. The categories for disbursement were in the following sub-sectors:

- Food and drink processing, including agro-processing products (3);
- Manufacturing of textile, garments, footwear and headwear (1);
- Manufacturing of construction materials (2);
- Manufacturing of beauty and personal care products (1); and
- Manufacturing of chemical products including cleaning items (1).

The funding has enabled several of the beneficiaries to penetrate new export markets, including CARICOM countries, Canada, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Some of these projects are expected to facilitate further exports in the medium-term to non-traditional markets such as the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Germany, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica and Chile.

➤ **Criteria to access the Grant Fund Facility**

The criteria for assessing applicants are based on:

- The specific areas of eligibility. Eligible applicants include:
 - Sole proprietors, partnerships and companies wholly owned by Trinidad and Tobago nationals and registered and operating in Trinidad and Tobago.
 - Grants will be for the acquisition of new capital requirements/expenditure by small and medium-sized enterprises that are:
 - a. Export oriented; or
 - b. Producing an import substitute; or
 - c. Otherwise identified to support diversification of the economy.
 - Applicants will be required to meet at least 50% of the cost of the acquisition.
- Businesses must be registered and in operation for a minimum of two (2) years;
- Quality and completeness of the documentation submitted;

- Export orientation/import substitution;
- Financial capacity of the business; and
- The projected impact of the investment on the business' export growth or import substitution or diversification support.

➤ **Formula used to disburse funds under the Grant Fund Facility**

- *If the total cost of the acquisition is equal to or less than TT\$250,000.00* – The amount of funds disbursed is 50% of the total cost of the acquisition.
- *If the total cost of the acquisition is more than TT\$250,000.00* – The amount of funds disbursed is TT\$250,000.00, the maximum allowed under the Facility.

➤ **Details of the support systems in place to enable/assist companies to access the Grant Fund Facility**

- Companies can receive assistance by contacting the Investment Directorate of the MTI by telephone or email.
- Officials from the Investment Directorate present webinars to inform companies on the Grant and its application process.
- Officials from the Investment Directorate:
 - attend investment fora and seminars to promote the Grant.
 - participate in television and radio interviews to provide a greater insight on the Grant.
- The MTI has compiled a booklet outlining details on the various Grants offered by the Ministry and their relevant application processes.
- The MTI engages in extensive social media advertising to promote the Grants.

➤ **Follow-up actions on the successes of companies which have received Grant Funding**

The GFF provided beneficiaries with financing which allows for the expansion of operations, improvement in productivity and competitiveness, creation of product diversification into more innovative and high-value products, and penetration of new markets.

ExporTT Limited periodically follows up with these beneficiaries to determine the impact of the acquisitions on their respective operations in which a report is generated.

4.1.2 Expansion of the Steelpan Manufacturing Grant Fund Facility

On June 16, 2023, Cabinet agreed to the expansion of the Steelpan Manufacturing Grant Fund Facility to cover funding assistance for eligible applicants to attend both local and foreign trade shows, as well as the establishment of an online presence in reputable online market places. Cabinet also agreed to the establishment of a Steering Committee for the Development of a National Governance Framework for the Industry. Letters of appointment were issued to Members of the Committee.

➤ **Criteria to access the Steelpan Manufacturing Grant Fund Facility (SMGFF)**

The SMGFF is available to sole proprietors, partnerships and companies wholly owned by Trinidad and Tobago nationals and registered and operating in Trinidad and Tobago. Businesses must be in operation for a minimum of two (2) years.

The applications for funding under the SMGFF are to include but not be limited to:

- completed Application Form;
- documented evidence of cost of new machinery, equipment, software, tools, raw materials and training;
- business plan;
- Management Accounts for the previous two years of operation;
- business registration documents, where necessary;
- tax clearance certificate and VAT clearance certificate, where necessary.

Completed applications are reviewed by an Evaluation Committee, which consists of one (1) representative from each of the following:

- the MTI,
- the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts (MTCA),
- the Ministry of Finance,
- exporTT Limited, and
- MIC Institute of Technology (MIC-IT) – Chair

Submissions are evaluated based on:

- The specific areas of eligibility;
- Quality and completeness of the documentation submitted;
- Contribution to the development of the overall steelpan manufacturing industry;
- Evidence of financial capacity;
- The projected impact of the acquisition/support on future export growth/import substitution.

➤ **Formula used to disburse funds**

A Grant Agreement, which governs the disbursement of funds and any specific terms and conditions that were approved, is executed between the approved applicant, the MIC-IT and exporTT. Following this, MIC-IT effects payments directly to the suppliers of the approved machinery, equipment, software, tools, raw materials or training, through the bank. This funding is provided through the allocation of TT5,000,000.00 from the Grand Fund Facility, as approved by Cabinet in January 2020. Similarly, exporTT effects payments directly to the suppliers of the approved services for Export Promotion and E-Commerce, utilizing funds from the Public Sector Investments Programme (PSIP).

➤ **Details of support systems in place to enable/assist companies to access facilities**

Details on the SMGFF and a downloadable Application Form, are available on the MTI's website at tradeind.gov.tt, under "Funding and Programmes." To assist persons wishing to apply for the Grant, the Ministry has a dedicated team of professionals regularly provide the necessary information through webinars and presentations. They are also available to guide applicants through the various stages of the application process. Applicants are advised to speak to an Officer if they are unsure where to start or how to proceed. They may also email the MTI at mti-businessdev@gov.tt.

➤ **Findings of follow-up actions on the successes of companies which have received Grant Funding**

The Codrington Family Institute were able to improve their production time and efficiency after obtaining equipment, tools and raw materials through this Grant.

Panland Trinidad and Tobago was able to stock raw materials and to acquire key pieces of equipment which promoted quality, productivity and new product development.

4.1.3 Grant Fund Facility for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in the Yachting Sector

On February 24, 2022, Cabinet approved the establishment of a Grant Facility for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) within the Yachting Sector in the amount of TT\$10-million to finance eligible business costs. This was developed for MSEs involved in ship building, repair and maintenance, servicing of vessel, including yachts such as fiberglass work, welding, woodwork, upholstery, sail making, electronics and electrical work, painting and rigging, hospitality services, travel agency services and yacht brokerage subsectors. Micro businesses classified as companies with less than or equal to TT\$250,000 in annual turnover are eligible for a cash grant of up to TT\$20,000 to cover 100% of business costs; and small businesses classified as businesses with more than TT\$250,000 but less than or equal to TT\$8.0 million in annual turnover are eligible for cash grant of up to TT\$50,000 to cover 75% to 100% of particular business costs.

Since the launch of the Facility in March 2022, the MTI received one hundred and eight (108) applications for funding. Sixty-six (66) applications were approved valued at approximately TT\$1.7 million. In Fiscal 2023, twenty-five (25) applications were approved in the amount of TT\$406,132.51, and sixteen (16) applicants received funds in the amount TT\$267,138.06 as follows:

1. Emral Ramsahai for the purchase of equipment: \$14,449.85;
2. AVI's Marine Electrical for the purchase of tools: \$19,913.50;
3. Sign Lad Ltd for the purchase of machinery: \$20,000.00;
4. Ozia Griffith for the purchase of equipment, tools and rent: \$20,000.00;
5. Anthony Penn for the purchase of equipment: \$19,539.33;
6. TKW Woodworking Services for the purchase of equipment: \$19,019.99;
7. Anderson Homer for the purchase of Equipment and Tools: \$19,981.09;
8. Krendol Bourne /Chaguaramas Electrical Services for the purchase of Machinery and Equipment: \$19,998.00;
9. Grace Williams for the purchase equipment and rent: \$16,539.81;
10. Michael Lewis for the purchase of Equipment: \$19,416.49;
11. Ivy's Kitchen Corner for the purchase of raw materials: \$6,335.00;

12. Ned'z Eats for the purchase of raw materials: \$4,620.00;
13. Keshawn Morgan for the purchase of raw materials: \$7,325.00;
14. Keron Waldron for the purchase of tools and equipment: \$20,000.00;
15. Michael Trimmingham for the purchase of tools and equipment: \$20,000.00; and
16. Adrian Polyte for the purchase of machinery and equipment: \$20,000.00.

➤ **Criteria to access the Grant Fund Facility for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in the Yachting Sector**

- The Facility is intended to be used for MSE's involved in services related to:
- Ship building, repair and maintenance;
- Servicing of vessels, including yachts, such as fiberglass work, welding, woodwork; upholstery services, sail making, electronics and electrical work, painting and rigging;
- Hospitality services;
- Travel agency services; and
- Yacht brokerage.

For companies to be eligible to access the Grant in the above-mentioned economic activities, they must meet the following criteria:

- The companies operate their trade in support of the Yachting sector;
- The companies meet the qualifying criteria in the Governance Framework;
- The scope of services/products provided to the Yachting sector were sufficient; and
- The companies are viable in terms of continuity, including present and future contractual work.

➤ **Formula used to disburse funds**

The funding for this facility is not disbursed to the applicants but rather to the suppliers of the new machinery, equipment, tools and raw materials. The details on the formula to disburse funds are as follows:

- As part of the application process, applicants are required to provide an invoice from the supplier detailing items to be purchased and the associated costs.
- Once the application is approved the quotations submitted by the applicants are forwarded to the Ministry of Finance requesting releases.

- Once these releases are received by the Ministry of Trade and Industry, a disbursement of funds is made to exporTT.
- exporTT prepares a cheque to the supplier. Once the supplier is in receipt of the funding, the applicant can now collect the items specified on the quotation.

➤ **Details of support systems in place to enable/assist companies to access facilities**

Details on the Grant Facility for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in the Yachting Sector and a downloadable Application Form, are available on the MTI's website at tradeind.gov.tt, under "Funding and Programmes." To assist persons wishing to apply for the Grant, the Ministry has a dedicated team of professionals regularly provide the necessary information through webinars and presentations. They are also available to guide applicants through the various stages of the application process. Applicants are advised to speak to an Officer if they are unsure where to start or how to proceed. They may also email the Ministry at mti-businessdev@gov.tt.

4.1.1 Research and Development Facility

The Research and Development Facility (RDF) was established to promote increased business and trade, and engender innovation and competition, especially among SMEs across all non-energy sectors. Eligible projects and activities under the RDF included applications that will:

- facilitate/result in a significant improvement in process and product/service designs as a result of technological innovations;
- diversify a product/service by way of an innovative offering through the employment of new technologies;
- help companies to meet export market requirements especially in the area of innovative or higher value-added products/services;
- involve automation technologies and lean manufacturing processes.

The RDF was revised in 2018 to fund projects under three (3) phases as follows:

- *Phase I:* To establish the technical merit, feasibility and commercial potential of the proposed Research and Development (R&D) project - funding covers applicant's technical and empirical market research, among other things, and results in a technical and commercial feasibility report. The report would be used as evidence in the evaluation of any application for funding under Phase II of the project.

Funding during this phase shall not exceed 70% of the total cost of the project up to a maximum of \$100,000 over a six (6) month period.

- *Phase II:* To continue the R&D efforts initiated in Phase 1, and more specifically meeting relevant costs related to product/service development - funding covers applicant's prototype development and proof-of-concept, which cover both manufacturing and services. Funding in this Phase shall not exceed 50% of the total cost of the project up to a maximum of \$750,000 within a maximum two-year period. Applications to Phase II are not exclusive to Phase I awardees.
- *Phase III:* To pursue commercialization objectives based on the results from Phases I and/or II - funding is strictly based on the commercial potential of the product/service, particularly in export markets and would cover such approved costs related to launching the product or process in the market place. This can include marketing, publicity, advertising, publication of sales literature, trade fairs and product certification. The funding in this phase is limited to \$150,000, and applications to Phase III shall be exclusive to Phase II awardees.

In Fiscal 2023, export approved/disbursed funds to companies valued at approximately TT\$1.03 million:

- Phase I Grants: Feasibility Study: One hundred thousand dollars (TT\$100,000.00) was approved to one (1) company, Nio Digital Limited to conduct Market Research to determine the feasibility of entering the Central and Eastern European (CEE) market for Apps that offer Software/Business Solutions to SMEs.
- Phase II Grants: New or Modified Product/Service Development: Approved funding for one (1) company, Decker Petroleum and Marketing Company Ltd, for new and modified product/service developments in the amount of TT\$750,000.00. This project, Plastic into Treasure (P.I.T), introduces a form of technology that is capable of converting plastic waste to a solvent that can be used in the manufacturing of cutback asphalt; and disbursed funds to the following companies from previous Fiscal approvals:
 - Aeon Innovation Solutions Ltd: Online Platform Development - PAN Enterprise Cloud Development and Customer Implementation Consulting (Consulting & Intellectual Property) in the amount of TT\$188,199.00.

- Cube Root Farms Hydroponics Limited (Indoor Agriculture): Installation of environment systems grow lights and prototypes housing; Construction of hydroponic units for prototypes to grow strawberries, mushrooms and tomatoes; and Installation controls and sensors to monitor prototypes internal environment, nutrient delivery and light photoperiod in the amount of TT\$7,580.00.
- EIKM Holdings Limited: To make updates to online medical prescription platform. This platform will allow doctors to prescribe medication to patients digitally as well as allow for delivery to the patient in the amount of TT\$720,423.00.
- Kings Specialties: Product and process development/Improvement of King's Specialty's range of Eggless Cream Liqueurs to achieve improved shelf life, improved product quality, product stability and suitability for the export market in the amount of TT\$16,147.00.
- Phase III Grants: Commercialisation: Approved one (1) new application, Dingole E-Commerce Services Limited for marketing and commercialisation activities related to their "PanJam" VR/AR technology in the amount of TT\$150,000.00; and disbursed funds to Steven Edwards Production for also marketing and commercialisation activities for Distribution Systems Limited in the amounts of TT\$94,000.00

4.1.2 Co-Financing Facility

The initial Co-Financing Facility provided financing for export planning, training, standards implementation, packaging and labeling, market intelligence and other facets of export development. It was revised in Fiscal 2019 and incorporated the promotion and development of e-Commerce in Trinidad and Tobago. In Fiscal 2023, TT\$254,416 was disbursed to eleven (11) companies listed hereunder to overcome non-tariff barriers to export which negatively affect market access. Funds were used for website development, shipping of samples, tradeshow participation, and e-Commerce integration:

1. Crucial Chemicals Limited for website development;
2. Engineering and Clean Technologies Limited for website development;
3. Premier Agencies (Caribbean) Limited for shipping of samples;
4. Health Mix for shipping samples;
5. Fashion.Art.Music (F.A.M.) Limited for tradeshow participation;
6. SMAKs for e-Commerce integration;
7. Cargo Consolidators Agency Limited for tradeshow participation;
8. Mega Interior and Construction Limited for website development;
9. RHS Marketing Limited for tradeshow participation;
10. L&S Surveying Services for tradeshow participation at Suriname Energy, Oil and Gas Summit; and
11. Phillips Contracting Limited.

4.1.3 Apprenticeship Programme for the Non-energy Manufacturing Sector in Trinidad and Tobago

The MTI in collaboration with the MIC Institute of Technology (MIC-IT), the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) and the National Training Agency of Trinidad and Tobago (NTA) developed a three-year Programme to build human resource capacity within the manufacturing sector and address shortages of skilled labour. The Programme was launched in May 2022 with a cohort of one hundred and thirty-five (135) trainees in the first year. Cohort 1 completed its first year of the 3-year programme in May 2023; and Cohort 2 year 1 commenced on June 20, 2023 with an enrolment of one hundred (100) trainees. On completion of the programme, over three hundred (300) graduates will be equipped with the necessary skills to fill existing and future vacancies within the manufacturing sector.

4.1.4 Apprenticeship Programme for the Wood and Wood Products Manufacturing Sub-sector

This programme, launched on August 16, 2022, was developed in collaboration with MIC-IT, the TTMA and the NTA to address skills gaps and fill existing vacancies within the wood and wood-related products manufacturing sub sector. This two-year programme commenced in November 2022 and will train apprentices in three (3) areas; Carpentry, Woodworking and Joinery Technology. The two-year programme commenced in

November 2022 in three (3) areas; Carpentry, Woodworking and Joinery Technology with fifty (50) apprentices. The programme is expected to conclude in November 2024.

4.1.5 Export Capacity Building Programme

- a) *The International Certification Fund (ICF)* is designed to assist exporters in achieving international certification in food/beverage and other product compliance to meet the quality and safety standards of international markets and franchises. Three (3) companies from the Food and Beverage, Construction and Household and Industrial Chemical Sub-Sectors were provided support to attain GMP Compliance, HACCP Certification, and ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System Certification at a cost of TT\$348,316.00. The attainment of these certifications takes two (2) and six (6) months respectively. This would allow companies to engage in import substitution and export to new markets in Guyana, Barbados, Jamaica, St. Vincent, and Grenada. In Fiscal 2023, exports generated by all thirteen (13) successful ICF applicants were estimated at a value of US\$1.16M or TT\$7.9M.
- b) *The Tobago Capacity Building Programme:* Ten (10) Tobagonian Companies benefitted from support for packaging and product upgrades in collaboration with CARIRI under the *Tobago Indigenous Sweets Project*. CARIRI is conducting a five (5) month Packaging Upgrade and Product Testing Training Workshop which involves, *inter alia*, assistance with product labelling and packaging through a Food Additives Workshop and assistance with the development of the participants' nutritional facts. Additionally, these companies participated in Digital Marketing Training from May 16 to 24, 2023, as well as a Branding, Packaging Design and Compliance Presentation on August 4, 2023.
- c) *The Export Accelerator Programme:* This Programme offers assistance to local companies that have innovative products and international appeal but require targeted support to take their businesses and products to international markets. Nine (9) companies from the Household and Industrial Chemicals, Construction, Packaging, and Food and Beverage Sub-Sectors benefitted from targeted training and support to help propel their businesses and products into international markets. Companies received export capacity building training and assistance with developing Export Plans and Company Profiles. Through this programme, these companies were able to

access new markets - Guyana, Jamaica, Grenada, Dominica and Colombia. Exports generated for Fiscal 2023 through this programme were valued at US\$307,000 or TT\$2.09 million.

d) *Labelling and Product Testing Fund*: The Fund provides assistance to exporters for the modification to a product labelling, packaging, appearance, or functionality in order to meet the destination market requirements, consumer preferences, and culture. ExportTT provided approximately TT\$83,108 in financial assistance to four (4) companies from the Household and Industrial Chemicals, Food and Beverage, and Agro-Processing Sub-Sectors to facilitate product testing and improve their product labelling to meet the entry requirements of the USA, Antigua, St. Vincent, Grenada, Barbados, and Dominica. In Fiscal 2023, exports generated by all seven (7) successful applicants since the launch in March 2022 were estimated at US\$13,000 or TT\$88,000.

4.1.6 National SheTrades Hub

The National SheTrades Hub (Hub), conceptualised by the International Trade Centre (ITC) is aimed at empowering female-led businesses with opportunities to grow and enhance their businesses. The Hub was launched by MTI through exportTT on October 28, 2020 and has over seven hundred (700) registered local women-owned businesses on the platform as at September 2023, and several of them engaged in the following initiatives:

1. Seventeen (17) women participated in the Trade and Investment Convention (TIC), attended business-to-business meetings and capacity building seminars. As a result of the exposure received, these women networked with other women on the Hub to secure a spot at TIC 2024 which will be self-funded.
2. Export Centers Company Limited Christmas Craft Market: Twenty-nine (29) women (nineteen (19) from Trinidad and ten (10) from Tobago) took part in this event and were able to sell their goods at the market.
3. MTI hosted a SheTrades International Women's Day networking event at the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Center on March 8, 2023. This was attended by over 400 women.

4. Three (3) companies - Handmade by Jeanette Company; Pinkberri Kosmetique'; and Christique Clothing participated in a Trade Mission to St. Lucia in August 2023. Handmade by Jeanette received orders of five hundred (500) cases each for two (2) of the company's products – chocolate steak sauce; and chocolate steak salt of two (2) sizes 150ml and 50ml.
5. One hundred and six (106) women trained in areas of Export Planning, Export Readiness and in Identifying and Assessing Export Markets.

4.2 Deepening and Expansion of Trinidad and Tobago's Trading Relationship

4.2.1 Export Promotion

a) *Trade Missions/Trade Shows*: In Fiscal 2023 exporTT together with Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) executed eight (8) trade missions to Curaçao: November 1-4, 2022; Jamaica: November 20-24, 2022, Jamaica Services: July 3-6, 2023; Grenada: January 31, 2023-February 3, 2023; Dominican Republic: May 1-5, 2023; Colombia: May 23-27, 2023; Suriname: June 19-22, 2023; St Lucia: August 9-12, 2023; Inward Buyers' Mission (inbuyTT): March to September 2023; and participated in seven (7) trade shows: Guyana Basin Summit: October 4-6, 2022; China International Import Expo: November 5-10, 2022; Havana International Fair, Cuba: November 14-18, 2022; ExpoComer (Panama): March 28-30, 2023; 3rd Suriname Energy, Oil and Gas Summit and Exhibition: June 19-22, 2023; Japan Expo 2025: September 6-14, 2023; and Americas Food and Beverage Show: September 18-20, 2023.

exporTT and TTMA facilitated participation of over one hundred and forty (140) small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in trade missions and trade shows. These interactions resulted in more than seven hundred and fifty (750) business-to-business meetings. The total estimated value of export orders stemming from these endeavors amounted to over US\$900,000 (TT\$6,093,000).

b) *Establishment of Commercial Offices/Appointment of Commercial Officers and Commercial Attachés*: Cabinet in August 2022 approved the establishment of

commercial offices in Panama, United States of America and the United Kingdom; and the appointment of Commercial Attachés in China, Guyana, Jamaica and South Africa. The main focus of the Attachés will be to boost exports, assist in diversifying export markets and promote inward investment. In particular, they will identify export opportunities for goods and services, providing timely market intelligence and efficient logistical support to develop trade and investment, real-time information to exporters on challenges and opportunities in the respective markets and in navigating through the regulatory and legal frameworks. In July 2023, three (3) Commercial Officers were appointed to Panama, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America; and two (2) Commercial Attachés were appointed to Guyana and Jamaica, respectively. These placements to the various countries which took place in Fiscal 2024.

4.2.2 Trade and Investment Promotion Agency

In an effort to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure a targeted approach to trade and investment promotion, the MTI sought to strengthen and modernise the National Trade and Investment infrastructure through the establishment of a single Trade and Investment Promotion Agency. The MTI has begun to execute the necessary statutory requirements for the amalgamation of the operations of InvesTT, ExporTT and CreativeTT into the new single Agency. The following activities have been completed:

- The valuation of the entities;
- Assessment Report on the existing HR capacity of entities; and
- Draft Change Management and Communication Plan.

The treatment of shares and treatment of unionised employees are ongoing.

4.2.3 Market Access for Trinidad and Tobago's Exporters

a) Trinidad and Tobago – Chile Partial Scope Trade Agreement

On October 20, 2020, Trinidad and Tobago signed a General Framework Agreement with Chile for the negotiation of a Partial Scope Trade Agreement (PSTA) aimed at increasing trade between the two (2) countries by providing market access at reduced rates of duty, on a list of products. Four (4) Rounds of negotiations have been concluded. The Third and Fourth Rounds of negotiations concluded in December 2022 and June 2023, respectively. The Fifth Round is expected to be completed in June 2024.

b) *Trinidad and Tobago – Curaçao Partial Scope Trade Agreement*

On September 17, 2022 Trinidad and Tobago and Curaçao agreed to the General Framework Agreement for negotiation for a Partial Scope Trade Agreement. Discussions on the timeline for the negotiations and trade disciplines to be covered under the PSTA were held in August 2023. The First Round of Negotiations is scheduled for July 2024.

c) *CARICOM – Colombia Trade Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement*

CARICOM and Colombia exchanged offers on August 5, 2022 in preparation for the Second Round of negotiations to be held in Colombia. Trinidad and Tobago's Initial Offer of products, approved by Cabinet on July 13, 2023, was submitted to the CARICOM Secretariat on July 21, 2023. Preparations are ongoing for the Second Round of Negotiations carded for Fiscal 2024.

d) *Trinidad and Tobago-Ghana Bilateral Investment Treaty:*

Cabinet previously agreed, *inter alia*, that Trinidad and Tobago enter into negotiations for a Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investment Agreement (RPPIA), also known as a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) with Ghana, to encourage trade and investment. A negotiation team was formed and comprised officials from the MTI, the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and the Solicitor General's Department of the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs (AGLA) with the MTI as Chair.

The First Round of negotiations was held virtually during the period May 23-25, 2023. During the First Round, the Delegations conducted a review of the first 12 of 25 Articles of the text in addition to the Title and Preambular paragraphs. Negotiations have since been completed in May 2024.

e) *Fit4Europe II: This project is geared towards developing the Export Readiness of Trinidad and Tobago Companies for the European Union (EU) Market - Sweden and Germany. This project began in March 2022 and will conclude on September 30, 2024. On August 22 and 23, 2023, exporTT engaged in market dissemination webinars on goods, and services, respectively. Companies were invited to participate in this project*

under the relevant tiers of Goods and Services: Tier 1 - International and Regional export experience; Tier 2 - Regional export experience; and Tier 3 - MSMEs woman-owned/led or rural-based.

4.2.4 Promotion of Economic Integration

Trinidad and Tobago's participation at CARICOM's Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED) ensures that national interests are reflected in the regional trade policy development, and necessary approvals are secured for national policy implementation.

On January 1, 2023, the suspension of the Common External Tariff (CET) was extended for twenty (20) basic food items including dried salted pollock fillets, other Cheese (Cheddar), other black tea (fermented), other partly fermented tea, canned corn beef, canned herrings, canned sardines, canned tuna, canned mackerel, active yeasts, all edible preparations for infant use, other (Soya Bean Oil), virgin olive oil, other: Sunflower-seed or safflower oil and fractions thereof, Canola Oil, frozen french fries, refined sugar, powdered milks: in powder, granules or other solid forms, of a fat content, by weight not exceeding 1.5%; and in powder, granules or other solid forms, of a fat content, by weight exceeding 1.5%, not containing added sugar or other sweetening matter, other powdered milks. The suspension of the CET was also extended to non-alloy steel, sulphonic acid and audio compact discs, selected personal protective equipment, road paving materials and petroleum products such as motor spirits and hydraulic brakes fluid. The suspension of the CET on these items allows Trinidad and Tobago to reduce the customs duties charged on items, resulting in reduced cost for inputs for manufacturers and lowered prices for consumers.

Moreover, in May 2023, the suspension of the CET was implemented on a list of over three thousand (3,000) pharmaceutical items for treating ailments of communicable and non-communicable diseases including pains, cold and flu, cancers, chronic disease and neurological disorders.

During Fiscal 2023, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) provided support to the local cement industry. Trinidad and Tobago sought and was approved by the 55th Meeting of the COTED in November 2022 to increase the rate of

duty on Other Hydraulic Cement (HS 2523.90.00) from a rate of duty of 5% to 20% for the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023. The GORTT also implemented an Import Licensing Regime and the maintenance of the Quota ceiling of 150,000 tonnes allowed for HS 2523.29.10 – Building Cement (Grey) and HS 2523.90.00 - Other Hydraulic Cement.

Trinidad and Tobago also obtained an alteration of the CET on Chlorine Gas from 0%-10%, as it was able to demonstrate that the country's production satisfied 75% of regional demand which qualified the product for a protective rate of duty against products imported from extra-regional sources.

4.3 Export Performance

In Fiscal 2023, total exports for the non-energy sector was valued at TT\$14.8 billion. This showed a decrease by approximately twenty percent (20%) when compared to TT\$18.3 billion in Fiscal 2022. The overall decline in non-energy exports resulted primarily in the Iron and Steel subsector and the Basic Chemicals and Fertilizers subsector.

The Iron and Steel subsector declined by 35% or approximately TT\$2.4 billion in value, moving from TT\$6.8 billion in 2022 to TT\$4.4 billion in 2023. More specifically, within the Iron and Steel subsector, Ferrous Products from Iron Ore Reduction (HS 7203.10.00) accounted for the largest decrease in value by approximately TT\$2.4 billion or 37%, moving from TT\$6.4 billion in 2022 to TT\$4.0 billion in 2023. Under this HS classification, products such as iron pellets and iron rods are exported. The main exporter in Fiscal 2023 being Nu-Iron Ltd who indicated that its operations in 2023 were negatively affected by international market conditions.

The Basic Chemicals and Fertilizers subsector, which includes in the main: Melamine, Oxygen, Solid Sodium Hydroxide, Nitrogen, Argon, Carbon Dioxide and Citric Acid but not including Urea and Anhydrous Ammonia, declined by 49% or approximately TT\$356.8 million in value, moving from TT\$732.4 million in 2022 to TT\$375.6 million in 2023. More specifically, within the Basic Chemicals and Fertilizers subsector, Melamine (HS 2933.61.00) accounted for the largest decrease in value by approximately TT\$390.2

million or 61%, moving from TT\$636.4 million in 2022 to TT\$246.2 million in 2023. The main exporter in Fiscal 2023 being Methanol Holdings Ltd.

Despite this decline, it is to be noted that during this fiscal period non-energy exports revealed growth in a number of Trinidad and Tobago's products as follows:

Top Non-Energy Products for Fiscal 2023

- Waste and Scrap Iron increased in value by approximately TT\$956 million, moving from TT\$1.2 million in 2022 to TT\$957 million in 2023;
- Cereals increased in value by TT\$63.9 million, moving from TT\$311.8 million in 2022 to TT\$375.7 million in 2023;
- Cigarettes containing Tobacco increased in value by TT\$45.2 million, moving from TT\$226.6 million in 2022 to TT\$271.8 million in 2023;
- Toilet Paper increased in value by TT\$44.8 million, moving from TT\$147.2 million in 2022 to TT\$192.0 million in 2023;
- Non-Alcoholic Beverages increased in value by TT\$41.0 million, moving from TT\$207.2 million in 2022 to TT\$248.3 million in 2023; and
- Plastic Bottles increased in value by TT\$26.1 million, moving from TT\$67.3 million in 2022 to TT\$93.4 million in 2023;

Notably the Food and Beverage sector experienced an overall increase by 9% moving from TT\$2.9 billion to TT\$3.3 billion.

4.4 Implementation of the National Quality Infrastructure Enhancement Programme

The MTI in collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) continued to implement projects identified within the National Quality Policy during Fiscal 2023 as listed hereunder:

4.4.1 Establishment of an independent Body: Trinidad and Tobago Accreditation Services for Conformity Assessment

The MTI and TTBS continued to work alongside the Office of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Legal Affairs (AGLA) to finalise legislation which underpins the transition of Trinidad and Tobago Laboratory Accreditation Service (TTLAB), the existing local accreditation body, to Trinidad and Tobago Accreditation Services for Conformity Assessment (TTASCA) an independent body, to ensure compliance with the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC). This is expected to be operationalised in Fiscal 2024.

4.4.2 National Programme for the Accreditation of all Public Laboratories

On November 9, 2022 and December 14, 2022, two (2) laboratories, from the first call, Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA); and Trinidad and Tobago National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited (NP) were fully accredited, respectively. This enabled accreditation, consistent with the requirements of the international standard, ISO/IEC 17025 - *General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories*. This standard (ISO/IEC 17025) examines the competency of testing and calibration laboratories to conduct specific tests. It is useful for any organisation that performs testing, sampling or calibration and wants to demonstrate that it can produce consistent and trustworthy results. Accreditation bodies use this standard to assess the overall confidence in and competence of the personnel, resources and management system to provide a valid test result. The process of Accreditation generally involves auditing of the laboratory by assessment teams including experts in organisational aspects such as management systems and technical activities (*inclusive of: personnel, facilities and environmental conditions, equipment, metrological traceability (calibration of test equipment), externally provided products & services, review of requests and contracts, selection and validation of methods, sampling, handling of test items as well as technical records, that is, test reports*) of the laboratory.

A second call for new projects opened in February 2023 in which TTBS received applications from two testing laboratories and one medical laboratory as follows:

- Eastern Regional Health Authority/Sangre Grande Hospital (ISO/IEC15189:2022);
- Phoenix Park Gas Processors (ISO/IEC 17025:2017); and
- Water and Sewerage Authority (ISO/IEC 17025:2017)

These laboratories would have developed Project Implementation Plans in conjunction with their assigned consultants for developing their requisite Quality Management Systems to ISO/IEC 17025:2017 - General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories; and ISO 15189:2022 - Medical laboratories - Requirements for quality and competence. The activities towards becoming accredited include:

- Training and Awareness programmes for the staff of the organisations on the requirements of the requisite standards;
- Documenting the quality management system (what is actually done/ required);
- Participating in further sector specific training as required;
- Participating in quality assurance programmes such as proficiency testing and inter-laboratory comparisons; and
- Conducting internal audits and management reviews of the system.

4.4.3 TTBS Building Renovation Programme

- a) The replacement of TTBS Roof was completed in June 2023. TTBS' roof was over twenty-five (25) years old and had deteriorated such that the organisation was experiencing multiple leaks which could no longer be temporarily remediated. This was affecting the ability of persons to conduct work and damaging the rest of the facilities and also the laboratory equipment.

- b) Modernisation of the Temperature and Humidity Lab was completed in April 2023. The modernisation of the Lab was to improve the efficiency and organisation of the lab. Previously the lab was situated in two locations, which provided challenges with the movement of sensitive equipment from one lab to the next. Currently, the lab is housed in one space.

- c) Upgrade of building air-conditioning system: In October 2023, two (2) R22 hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) air conditioning condensers were replaced with two (2) R410 air conditioning condensers. The life span of the existing units had ended and had to be replaced. TTBS installed units that are more environmentally friendly as a result of switching to a system which utilises R410 which has lower global warming potential than the previous system. TTBS also expected improved system performance, and greater cooling capacity.

4.4.4 Quality Infrastructure (QI)

- a) TTBS hosted the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) Technical Committee 309. In September 2017, the International Organisation for Standardisation's Technical Committee TC 309 initiated the development of a new International Standard to assist organizations to:
- Increase organisational effectiveness, sustainability, accountability and fairness;
 - Fulfil the organisation's purpose and reflect on its identity and mission and how value is generated and delivered to stakeholders; and
 - Avoid major incidents

ISO/TC 309 is responsible for standardisation in the field of governance relating to aspects of direction, control and accountability of organisations. In light of the above and based on the strategic priorities outlined in TTBS' Strategic Plan and National Standardisation Strategy 2019-2022, TTBS and by extension, Trinidad and Tobago, has been involved in the work of ISO/TC 309 since its inception in 2018 via the participation of Dr Axel Kravatzky and other national experts. Trinidad and Tobago holds the Vice-Chair position on ISO/TC 309 via the participation of Dr Kravatzky. This is a significant leadership position with the ISO standardisation community which was made possible via a twinning arrangement with the British Standards Institution, which is the world-renowned National Standards Body in the United Kingdom.

TTBS hosted the ISO/TC 309 Plenary Meeting from April 16 to 21, 2023. The hosting of this event heightened the profile of TTBS as the national organisation championing standards and quality. In addition, TTBS successfully adopted four

(4) International Standards for Governance developed by ISO/TC 309 and promoted the application of these standards in developed and developing countries as part of the ISO/TC 309 Plenary meeting and a Seminar on Integrated Governance. The national adoptions of the International Standards were as follows:

- Governance of organisations – Guidance (TTS/ISO 37000:2022);
- Anti-bribery management systems – Requirements with guidance for use (TTS/ISO 37001:2022);
- Whistleblowing management systems – Guidelines (TTS/ISO 37002:2022) and;
- Compliance management systems – Requirements with guidance for use (TTS/ISO 37301:2022)

It was a high-profile event designed to promote the benefits of standardisation among key stakeholders in the national and regional community via the high-level Opening Plenary as well as a regional workshop on the linkage of Governance to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the importance of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) initiatives for facilitating investment.

Sixteen (16) countries including Nigeria, People's Republic of China, Saint Lucia, Singapore, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Argentina, Jamaica, India, Germany, Denmark, Canada and Australia physically attended the meeting in Trinidad and Tobago. Eleven other countries participated virtually.

Additionally, TTBS hosted a workshop on Integrated Governance on April 17, 2023. 105 persons physically participated and 114 participants joined via Zoom. This event was streamed live on YouTube, attracting 207 views. This session highlighted the Strategic Business Plan for ISO/TC 309, Integrated Governance perspectives at the national, regional and international levels, the Commonwealth Standards Network and promotion of Good Governance Standards, a roundtable discussion on the Regulatory Framework for Governance in Trinidad and Tobago, case studies related to anti-bribery management systems, compliance management systems, Massy Group's Journey to Good Governance.

TTBS will be developing its Governance Framework based on the International Standards for Governance; TTBS will be developing case studies on the application of the International Standards for Governance by national stakeholders.

- b) Inaugural National Quality Awards (NQA) Programme was launched on March 15, 2023 under four categories: i) Manufacturing ii) Services iii) SMEs and iv) Agriculture and Agro processing. This project aims to develop National Quality Award (NQA) programmes in member states with the rationale to recognise firms that have implemented quality management practices within their organisations. In the execution of the NQA programme, twenty (20) applications received and eleven (11) satisfied the eligibility requirements. Audits began in September 2023.
- c) Modernisation of the Standards Act and the Metrology Act: The TTBS is currently governed by the Standards and Metrology Acts which are dated. As a result, the MTI in collaboration with the TTBS procured the services of a consultant to draft the required amendments for the modernisation of the Standards Act and Metrology Act in aid of strengthening the National Quality Infrastructure. The Draft Legislative Brief which included the proposed amendments was completed in September 2022. The submission of a Note for Cabinet is imminent.

4.4.5 Advancing the National Metrology System for Trinidad and Tobago

Metrology Quantities of Goods Regulations Implementation: Net content verification of prepacked goods commenced in September 2023 with a focus on the main food staples to ensure consumers receive value for money. Some of the products to be verified include rice, flour, cooking oil, sugar, salt, split peas, powdered milk and powdered laundry detergent. The Legal Metrology Inspectorate (LMI) would have tested over twenty (20) different brands of rice of varying sizes. Most of the brands met the requirements. Where there were deficiencies, TTBS met with the supplier/s for corrective action. This monitoring will be ongoing. A new commodity will be tested every quarter. The next commodity to be tested is flour.

4.4.6 Procurement of New Equipment

To enhance the work of the TTBS, attract new clients, and ensure accuracy in terms of measurements and reporting, TTBS purchased a Multifunction Calibrator on March 22, 2023, and a Cesium Standard and Network Time Protocol Server on May 4, 2023.

4.5 Support for the Creative Industries

4.5.1 FashionTT

a) Fashion Value Chain Investment Programme

The Fashion Value Chain Investment Programme (VCIP) consists of the following four (4) tiers which are specifically designed to meet the development needs of designers:

- i. *Global Value Chain (GVC)* is designed to support export-oriented activities of local designers.
 - In June 2023 six (6) GVC level designers participated in an In-Market Trade Mission to New York. One (1) designer - Keegan Simon of 1individual Aesthetic gained interests and has fulfilled an initial order in the amount of US\$1,500 (TT\$10,155). 1individual Aesthetic is also in the process of fulfilling orders in two (2) other Brooklyn-based brick and mortar stores; and an international online selling platform in addition to its three (3) in-store locations. Two (2) other designers - Charu Lochan Dass of CLD and Adiola Monsegue of Genesis Swimwear were accepted to feature their products in a brick and mortar which was launched in Brooklyn.
 - In July 2023 four (4) GVC level designers participated in an In-Market United Kingdom Trade Mission with the UK based Consultancy - *The Atentive Agency*. All of the participating designers received interests.
- ii. *Non-Global Value Chain* is designed to improve designers' export readiness to enable them to compete in the global market. In June 2023, ten (10) designers concluded a one-year training programme.
- iii. *Business Advisory Programme* is designed to provide business mentoring, training and financing to designers who require one-on-one business support in gaining a comprehensive understanding of their business value chains.

Seventy-four (74) designers concluded three hundred and twenty sessions, a one-year programme, in June 2023.

- iv. *Entrepreneurial Development Programme (EDP) is designed to provide monthly training in areas such as Business Plan Development, Costing and Pricing, Record Keeping and Cash Flow Management, Business Taxation and marketing Strategy. Seventy-five (75) new and emerging designers concluded training in April 2023.*

b) Fashion LookBook

The Fashion LookBook is a quarterly publication by FashionTT that showcases local designer's clothing and accessories. Three (3) editions were published in Fiscal 2023 - the seventh, eighth and ninth editions which featured twenty-six (26), twenty-five (25) and eleven (11) designers, respectively and were distributed globally to embassies and consulates with a view of attracting customers locally, regionally and internationally. The FashionTT LookBook Webpage was promoted via Google Ads and Social Media Boosts. As at September 30, 2023, this promotion generated approximately fourteen (14) million views from consumers throughout the Caribbean, Canada, the United Kingdom, Nigeria and the United States.

4.5.2 MusicTT

a) Live Music District (LMD)

The Live Music District (LMD) is an entertainment hub brand launched by MusicTT in 2018 which seeks to boost the availability of live music performance opportunities to local artistes. The LMD was initially targeted the Port of Spain and environs and has now grown to other areas across Trinidad and Tobago. In Fiscal 2023, MusicTT partnered with thirty-six (36) events which in turn saw a total of five hundred and fifty-one (551) artistes with four hundred and thirteen (413) unique performers for which jobs were created. An average of one hundred and thirty-eight (138) artistes were contracted on two (2) or more occasions.

Overall, since the inception, this programme has created temporary jobs for one thousand, seven hundred and forty-eight (1,748) performers. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of performances occurred during the two most recent Fiscal periods: 2022 and 2023.

b) RVRB Experience Music Conference

RVRB (reverb) eXperience (RVRB X) is a music business conference aimed at facilitating business-to-business connections, capacity building and networking towards possible export opportunities and collaborations for the music industry. Since its launch in 2021, the RVRB X has facilitated ninety-four (94) musical performances, one hundred and forty-nine (149) speakers, seventy (70) sessions and approximately 420,000 online viewers from sixty-one (61) countries. It has also created sixty (60) job opportunities for a mix of sole traders and Limited Liability Companies in fields across the media and entertainment sector.

The conference in 2023 unveiled the new look of the brand solidifying a very futuristic and widely accepted modern appeal based on an international survey. This was also the event's first year in a hybrid format as prior years were held solely online. The 2023 event had twenty-eight (28) performances across three (3) venues from popular and on the rise artistes, twenty-five (25) speakers from six (6) countries, seventeen (17) sessions, seventeen (17) corporate partners, one hundred and twenty-five (125) physical attendees and over 350,000 online viewers from across fifty-two (52) countries, with a reach of 762,265. Seventy-one (71) persons were mentored and thirty-four (34) business-to-business connections were made.

c) Gospel Music Awards Trinidad and Tobago (GMATT)

The Celian Group together with MusicTT and the MTI launched the GMATT (which formed part of the Gospel Fest weekend) in April 2023. This prestigious event has played a pivotal role in acknowledging the outstanding talents of Trinidad and Tobago, while also providing invaluable platforms for these artistes to expand their audiences and embark on promising international careers. The GMATT has emerged as a beacon of celebration and recognition within the Gospel local community as well as the wider regional community and is viewed as the epitome of recognition and excellence in Gospel Music regionally.

MusicTT's involvement with the gospel music locally helped boost production for this sector by ten percent (10%). This is also evident through the increase of GMATT nominations by 25%. Through MusicTT, the GMATT awards was also advertised via the official STELLAR Awards Facebook community group bringing awareness to international audience. The STELLAR Awards is the largest gospel music awards in North America, which has been televised for 39 years strong, to date. Their endorsement encourages tourism and can open doors to collaborations for artistes which can lead to increased fan bases, and employment generation. It can also be a source of mentorship to the GMATT team.

d) Caribbean Music Awards (CMA)

The inaugural Caribbean Music Awards (CMA) took place on the August 31, 2023 at the iconic King's Theatre in New York of which MusicTT was a Bronze Sponsor. As the CMAs' first act of service Machel Montano was honoured with the coveted Lifetime Achievement Award which was also announced via the prestigious Billboard Magazine on July 26, 2023. Calypso legend David Rudder was recognized as the Elite Calypso Music Honouree at the awards ceremony.

The event also boasted a lineup of over twenty (20) Trinidad and Tobago nominees, some of whom included Bunji Garlin, Destra Garcia, Ding Dong, Nailah Blackman, Fay-Ann Lyons, Jadel, Mical Teja, Kes and others. Other nominated regional powerhouses included: Koffee, Beres Hammond, Alison Hinds, Beenie Man, Chronixx, Jaz Elise, Sean Paul, Rihanna, Spice and many more.

Trinidad and Tobago talent was prominent on the night with a total of thirty-five (35) local nominees. Nine (9) local artistes were awardees and seven (7) categories were won by local artistes.

This achievement underscores MusicTT's dedication to fostering the country's musical talent, helping artistes reach new heights, and further solidifies their commitment to the vibrant and diverse Caribbean music community.

Partnering with the Caribbean Music Awards provided the GORTT with a valuable platform to showcase the country's vibrant music and cultural scene on an international

stage. The event attracted a diverse audience (a full house of 3500 persons), including music enthusiasts, artistes, media and industry professionals. By maintaining a continued partnership, the GORTT can leverage this opportunity to promote inward tourism.

4.5.3 FilmTT

a) T&T Locations: Unseen, Unexpected

T&T Locations: Unseen, Unexpected advertising campaign uses the production of promotional videos and placement of international film magazines such as “Location Guide” to promote and market Trinidad and Tobago as a globally attractive Caribbean production location. It seeks to secure a consistent increase in the number of inward productions from specific markets, increase sectoral employment, and the flow of foreign exchange into the economy. In Fiscal 2023, FilmTT hosted 13 international productions which created one hundred and seventy (170) employment opportunities and generated approximately TT\$2,006,966.24 million in revenue.

b) Nigerian Producers Exchange - Script to Screen with James Amuta

Script to Screen with James Amuta, a renowned Nigerian filmmaker, provided aspiring local filmmakers with a comprehensive training program, spanning from scriptwriting to the practical aspects of filmmaking. Under his guidance, participants were taken through an intensive virtual workshop during May 17, 2023 to June 5, 2023. The programme covered various aspects of film production, including screenwriting, cinematography and directing. After the successful completion of the virtual workshop, thirty (30) short films and twenty-eight (28) scripts were created. Participants were given a unique opportunity to put their newly acquired skills into practice through hands-on filming experience with Mr. Amuta by filming a short teaser film, ‘*When The Monsters Come Out*’, and ‘*A Mother’s Revenge*’ which were submitted to the Toronto International Film Festival’s marketplace. This programme in addition to the filming of these projects upskilled fifty-two (52) industry professionals and generated forty-three (43) employment opportunities.

c) Script to Screen Programme

FilmTT implemented an incubator programme for five (5) film screenwriters titled “*On Set*”. This programme requires the screenwriter to create a five (5) episode television sitcom in collaboration with TTT. One of the five (5) screenwriters was selected for production by a panel of judges in Fiscal 2022. This TV series, a local Situational Comedy (Sitcom) entitled *Mixed Up*, was red carpet premiered in June 2023 and aired on TTT on September 25, 2023. The series utilised 100% local talent which was led by renowned playwright Richard Ragoobarsingh. The production resulted in significant direct and indirect employment opportunities for various skilled professionals such as carpenters, painters, set designers, wardrobe stylists, hair and makeup artists. In a post-premiere marathon event, the estimated viewership of the series on TTT Limited was 31,410 households, which included terrestrial viewers and those watching the Live TV stream. This programme yielded a favourable influence on GDP. For example, the production designer for *Mixed Up*, opened one (1) storefront stemming from the training and insight gained, and generated employment for four (4) individuals for small events and between ten (10) and fifteen (15) individuals for larger events at Obsessive Designs, located at Roopnarine Complex, Caroni Savannah Road, Chaguanas.

d) Promotion of Trinidad and Tobago as a Film Friendly Destination

Five (5) Filmmakers from Trinidad and Tobago attended the British Film Institute Networking event in London, United Kingdom (UK) on October 9, 2023. Filmmakers networked with producers and distributors from the UK, Nigeria, France and Dominican Republic. Four (4) producers obtained networking opportunities through this event. One (1) filmmaker secured £35,000 from the British Film Institute for the production and premiere of their short film ‘*Trinidad Remains*’ which generated thirty-two (32) employment opportunities. Another team consisting of two (2) of the filmmakers, successfully produced a teaser, ‘*Maria*’, which has been generating positive social media reviews.

e) Content Creation and Marketing Fund

During Fiscal 2023, FilmTT provided a total funding amount of TT\$257,806.97 to support sixteen (16) content creators and industry professionals across various categories, including feature films, short films, online series, marketing, and distribution. These projects have reported progress made in production, marketing,

and distribution, with some projects successfully completing specific phases, such as teaser production and screenings, while others are still in the works, securing rights and funding. Seventy-three (73) employment opportunities have been generated by these projects.

4.6 Maritime and Leisure Marine Sectors

Sail Service Stay - Marketing and Promotion

In Fiscal 2023, the International Awareness Campaign - 'Sail Service Stay' was marketed and promoted in Holland Herald Inflight Magazine (KLM Airways); Caribbean Beat (Caribbean Airlines); High Life Magazine (British Airways); All At Sea; Yachts and Yachting; and SAIL magazine.

4.7 Implementation of Business Environment Reforms

4.7.1 Ease of Doing Business

a) Enhancement of the SEW

This initiative seeks to improve the trade performance and enhance the business competitiveness of Trinidad and Tobago through the strengthening and transformation of the Single Electronic Window (TTBizLink) into a world-class solution based on international standards.

The Trade and Business Information Portal is a central repository for all regulatory information related to investment, trade and business facilitation required by traders and businesses. As at September 30, 2023, the portal has attracted a total 146,342 unique visitors and 521,792 total visits from one hundred and sixty-six (166) countries.

b) Enhanced TTBizLink Application Software

This initiative seeks to improve the trade performance and enhance the business competitiveness of Trinidad and Tobago through the strengthening and transformation of the Single Electronic Window (TTBizLink) into a world-class solution based on international standards. The platform already eliminates the hassle of navigating multiple government departments and their respective processes, promotes transparency and

accountability, and by digitising and automating key processes, ensures faster, more accurate service delivery. Moreover, data-driven insights derived from this system enable MTI to make informed policy decisions, optimise resource allocation, and enhance overall governance.

The MTI launched the Enhanced TTBizLink Application Software on July 17, 2023. This included the enhancement of the thirty-six (36) existing services across seven (7) Ministries, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, and exporTT. Some of the enhanced features include:

1. a modernised, mobile responsive and user-friendly interface;
2. a pre-payment feature where users can draw down on payments when submitting applications;
3. digital approvals which allow applicants to download signed and stamped approval documents;
4. inherent security features and a self-audit facility, which improves transparency;
5. available data in real time, which aids in decision-making;
6. document verification via QR Code which allows anyone with a mobile phone to verify the authenticity of approval documents issued on TTBizLink;
7. increased processing efficiency and knowledge sharing among multiple agencies;
8. improved interoperability with other Government systems such as the Customs Border Control System, ASYCUDA, and the Immigration Division's Border Management System; and
9. online payment for services including permits and licences. It is to be noted that online payments were only implemented for those e-services that require fees. The Table below shows the specific e-services for which online payments were implemented.

Type of Service	Online payments implemented
E-Application for Certificate of Origin for Preferential Markets – exporTT	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Certificate of Origin for Non-Preferential Markets – Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Import Duty Concession – Investment Directorate, Ministry of Trade and Industry	No fee is required.

Type of Service	Online payments implemented
E-Application for Fiscal Incentives – Investment Directorate, Ministry of Trade and Industry	No fee is required.
E-Goods Declaration – i. Trade Licence Unit, Ministry of Trade and Industry ii. Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards iii. Plant Quarantine Services, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries iv. Food and Drug Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health v. Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health	Yes. Only TTBS requires fees.
E-Mobile Inspection – vi. Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards vii. Plant Quarantine Services, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries viii. Food and Drug Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health	No fee is required.
E-Application for Animal Import Permit – Animal Production & Health Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Animal Export Permit – Meat and Poultry Products – Animal Production & Health Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Animal Export Permit – Dairy and Dairy Products – Animal Production & Health Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Export Health Certificate – Food and Beverage – Food and Drug Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Export Health Certificate – Fish and Fishery Products – Food and Drug Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Export Health Certificate – Food and Beverage/Colombia – Food and Drug Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Free Sale Certificate – Food and Drug Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health	Yes, fee is required.

Type of Service	Online payments implemented
E-Application for Licence of Premises – Pesticides – Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Licence of Premises – Toxic Chemicals – Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Licence to Import a Pesticide – Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Licence to Import a Toxic Chemical – Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application to Draw Down from Toxic Chemicals Import Licence – Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health	No fee is required.
E-Application for Export Licence/Permit for Toxic Chemicals – Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Inspectorate, Chemistry, Food and Drugs Division (CFDD), Ministry of Health	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Licence to Store, Sell and Distribute Antibiotics – Pharmacy/Drug Inspectorate, Ministry of Health	No fee is required.
E-Application for Approval to Import Antibiotics – Pharmacy/Drug Inspectorate, Ministry of Health	No fee is required.
E-Application to Withdraw – Antibiotics Import Licence – Pharmacy/Drug Inspectorate, Ministry of Health	No fee is required.
E-Application to Withdraw from Bond – Antibiotics – Pharmacy/Drug Inspectorate, Ministry of Health	No fee is required.
E-Application for Licence to Export Antibiotics – Pharmacy/Drug Inspectorate, Ministry of Health	No fee is required.
E-Application for Licence to Store, Sell and Distribute Narcotics – Pharmacy/Drug Inspectorate, Ministry of Health	No fee is required.
E-Application for Licence to Import Narcotics – Pharmacy/Drug Inspectorate, Ministry of Health	No fee is required.
E-Application for Withdrawal – Narcotics Import Licence – Pharmacy/Drug Inspectorate, Ministry of Health	No fee is required.
E-Application for Plant Import Permit – Plant Quarantine Services, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries	No fee is required.
E-Application for Import Licence – Trade Licence Unit (TLU), Ministry of Trade and Industry	No fee is required.

Type of Service	Online payments implemented
E-Application for Export Licence – Trade Licence Unit (TLU), Ministry of Trade and Industry	No fee is required.
E-Application for Duty Relief Licence – Trade Licence Unit (TLU), Ministry of Trade and Industry	No fee is required.
E-Application for Safeguard Certificate – Trade Licence Unit (TLU), Ministry of Trade and Industry	No fee is required.
E-Application for Suspension Certificate – Trade Licence Unit (TLU), Ministry of Trade and Industry	No fee is required.
E-Application for Individual/Group Work Permit – Work Permit Secretariat, Ministry of National Security	Yes, fee is required.
E-Application for Extension of Individual/Group Work Permit – Work Permit Secretariat, Ministry of National Security	Yes, fee is required.

4.7.2 Automated Construction Permitting System ACPS (DevelopTT)

DevelopTT, launched in March 2020, is currently in use throughout Trinidad and Tobago and has facilitated the movement from a manual paper-based system to a system which is digital, modern, and paperless. Applicants have benefited from increased efficiency in the building approval system and have experienced a reduction in time and costs associated with obtaining services and approvals/permits. In Fiscal 2023 the WASA module for the Planning permission e-service was launched in Tobago; distributed all remaining equipment procured for DevelopTT to Tobago agencies; and implemented the function allowing all agencies the capacity to edit and preview content of the decision letters generated by the system.

4.7.3 Scrap Metal Policy for Trinidad and Tobago 2022-2027

In May 2023, the Scrap Metal Act, 2022, with the exception of Section 3(1), and Scrap Metal Regulations 2023 were proclaimed and came into effect. The Scrap Metal Act, 2022 repeals and replaces the Old Metal and Marine Stores Act. The Act introduces, *inter alia*, a new licensing regime for Dealers and Collectors of Scrap Metal; strengthens the regulation of the Scrap Metal Industry and allows for greater enforcement by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS). Other achievements during the Fiscal included the following:

- In accordance with the Act, the MTI established a Scrap Metal Unit to operationalise the new regulatory framework;
- Eight (8) Scrap Metal Inspectors were appointed to the Scrap Metal Unit;
- Since the re-opening of the industry and lifting of the Prohibition Order 2022, the value of exports of scrap metal stood at over TT\$100 million in June 2023;
- Training was provided to eight (8) Scrap Metal Inspectors and forty-four (44) TTPS officers; and
- Procured machinery and PPE for eight (8) Scrap Metal Inspectors.

The table below highlights the value of exports of scrap metal for the period February 24, 2023 to July 13, 2023:

Commodity Code	Commodity Description	Value (TT\$)
72041000	Waste and Scrap of Cast Iron	\$61,404,288
72042100	Waste and Scrap of Stainless Steel	\$1,802,023
72042900	Other Waste and Scrap of Alloy Steel	\$18,932,763
72043000	Waste Scrap of Tinned Iron or Steel	\$1,531,094
74040000	Copper Waste and Scrap	\$6,157,415
76020000	Aluminium Waste and Scrap	\$12,238,998
Grand Total		\$102,066,581

4.7.4 Combat Illicit Trade in Consumer Goods in Trinidad and Tobago

The Anti-Illicit Trade Task Force (AITTF), with responsibility for implementing the objectives of the National Action Plan to combat illicit trade in consumer goods in Trinidad and Tobago completed the Illicit Trade Awareness Campaign- Phase 1 and reviewed existing legislation relative to combating illicit trade.

5.7 Implementation of the Fair Trading Act through the Fair Trading Commission

The Trinidad and Tobago Fair Trading Commission (TTFTC) continued to promote the implementation of the Fair Trading Act in accordance with its mandate to maintain, promote and protect competition. TTFTC engaged in advocacy through webinars; addressed topical issues relating to anti-competitive business practices; and in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Technical Cooperation: Strengthening of the Competition Policy Framework was completed and the Guide to the Fair Trading Act was published in April 2023. This Guide helps both the consumers and the business community understand the main provisions of the Fair Trading Act. It also ensures all enterprises are made aware of their responsibilities and consumers and businesses are protected from anti-competitive activity and exploitative abuses of market power.

The Competition Policy provides Trinidad and Tobago with a general framework of competition law, together with machinery for enforcing it. Referencing the Green Paper, the main aim of our competition policy seeks to promote and maintain effective competition throughout the economy, and to ensure that competition is not distorted, restricted or prevented, either by private business conduct or by public policy.

Action to fulfil this aim falls into four main categories:

- preventing monopolies, where they exist, from abusing their power;
- preventing new monopolies from being created through mergers;
- eliminating anti-competitive agreements; and
- providing the Government with an expert source of advice on all Trinidad and Tobago's laws and policies having a bearing on competition.

These categories are further expounded below.

Curbing Abuse of Monopoly Power

Once a company is in possession of monopoly power, it is in a position to abuse that power in two ways:

- Exploitative practices can raise prices (or reduce quality) at the expense of the consumer.
- Exclusionary practices can inhibit competitors from entering or competing in the market.

Where a company has monopoly power, abuse of that power will be prohibited. The Fair Trading Commission (FTC) will be responsible for detecting, investigating, penalising and halting violations of this prohibition. It will have power to undertake investigations for this purpose, but a power triggered only on stated conditions. The FTC will have jurisdiction to launch a monopoly investigation if a single company holds a market share of more than 40%. The FTC's concern in such an investigation will be with the effects of the monopolist's actions in the market, in the particular circumstances concerned. The task will therefore be one of economic assessment.

Control of Anti-Competitive Mergers

Anti-competitive mergers can create monopolies, and monopolies can lead to abuse. Preventing anti-competitive mergers will be one of the main responsibilities of the FTC. Mergers and acquisitions in themselves are a proper part of the competitive process, however the control that is needed is a control over anti-competitive mergers, not a control over mergers as such. It is not the objective of merger control to freeze the industrial structure in Trinidad and Tobago into a pattern of small businesses. What is at issue is not the size or number of firms, but their power over the market. Mergers will qualify for examination under the Fair Trading Act, Chapter 81:13 ("the Act") if both of the companies involved have assets above a defined threshold; and at least one of them is carrying on business in Trinidad and Tobago.

Prohibiting Anti-Competitive Agreements

Cartels and other forms of collusive market-sharing agreement are regarded in all the major competition policy jurisdictions as calling not merely for scrutiny but for prohibition. The Act prohibits two or more competitors to enter into or carry out agreements which restrict, distort or prevent competition and have the object or effect of monopolising the market in Trinidad and Tobago or any part of it. It should be noted that the agreements prohibited are agreements between competitors. These are sometimes called horizontal agreements. Examples of the sort of agreements that would be caught by such a prohibition are:

- agreements to fix selling prices or buying prices;
- bid-rigging, i.e., secret agreements between bidders in a tender or auction;
- agreements to limit production or investment;
- agreements sharing out markets, e.g., by territory;

- agreements to refuse supply to certain categories of customer, or to subject them to burdensome conditions; and
- agreements to make sales subject to extraneous conditions, example, full-line forcing.

5.8 Building Economic Infrastructure and Securing Investments

In Fiscal 2023, the MTI through eTeck and invesTT focused on delivering policies and projects that sought to enhance the investment climate and increase investments in Trinidad and Tobago. These included the following:

5.8.1 Development of Economic Spaces for Investments

a) **Moruga Agro-Processing and Light Industrial Park**

The Moruga Agro-Processing and Light Industrial Park, commissioned on July 14, 2020, comprised five (5) factory shells (one shell is divided into two) inclusive of a purpose-built factory shell and six (6) land lots. The land lots offer leasable space for the growth and expansion of operations in the processing of primary agro products, and light manufacturing.

As at September 30, 2023 there were six (6) closed investments for five (5) factory shells and two (2) land lots with a total investment of TT\$18.4 million, and the creation of approximately one hundred and thirty-four (134) job opportunities. During Fiscal 2023, two (2) companies became operational with a total investment of TT\$7.2 million with an estimated generation of seventy-five (75) job opportunities.

b) **Tamana In-Tech Park**

The Tamana InTech Park (TIP) which spans 1,100 acres of land in Wallerfield, is aimed at fostering the development and growth of a knowledge-based economy. The TIP brings together scientific research, governmental organisations, business support and development programs in one physical location. The Park offers build-to-suit leasable land lots ranging in sizes up to 83,785 square meters and leasable commercial space in the Flagship Office Complex.

As at September 30, 2023, four (4) investors were at various are stages of investment at this Park. iQor, is currently operational (since 2015) with an employment level of 549. iQor intends to employ an additional 900 persons throughout its locations (Tamana, Chaguanas and Barataria) by the end of 2023, supported by the company's shift system. The remaining three (3) investors, with an estimated total value of TT\$13 million and at least thirty-four (34) jobs opportunities, are in advanced stages of discussions with InvestTT to establish operations at the Park.

c) Phoenix Park Industrial Estate

The Phoenix Park Industrial Estate (PPIE) located in Couva spans approximately one hundred and forty-four (144) acres of developed land. It is divided into seventy-eight (78) leasable lots with the required infrastructure and services inclusive of five (5) modern factory shells to be leased to investors. This Park targets businesses operating in high-value and light manufacturing logistics, distribution and warehousing.

investTT closed seventeen (17) investments - fourteen (14) LDIs and three (3) FDIs valued at TT\$442 million creating approximately eight hundred and fifteen (815) job opportunities as at September 30, 2023. This is inclusive of six (6) in Fiscal 2023 with a total value of over TT\$186 million.

These firms are involved in: logistics services, manufacturing, assembly, food & beverage, distribution, agro-processing, environmental management services, and consumer products.

d) Factory Road Industrial Estate

The Factory Road Industrial Estate, located in Chaguanas, spans sixty-seven (67) acres of land which consists of twelve (12) lots, and targets business activities in the areas of: Fish Processing; Food Processing; Manufacturing, Packaging and Distribution of Food Items; Light Manufacturing; Training; and Warehousing and Distribution.

As at September 30, 2023, nine (9) lots were leased to eight (8) tenants inclusive of five (5) tenants in Fiscal 2023. It is expected that altogether, the tenants of the Park would be investing an estimated TT\$725.6 million with the creation of over one thousand, one

hundred and ninety-one (1191) new jobs. Once works are completed, tenants will proceed with their plans for construction and development.

In August 2023, Town and Country Planning Division and Environmental Management Agency granted approval for construction at the Estate. eTeck is currently undertaking infrastructural works for the development of the Park: drainage, detention pond, wastewater recirculation system, roads and power. Infrastructural works are expected to be completed by June 2024.

5.8.2 Modernisation of the Investment Infrastructure

a) New Special Economic Zones (SEZ)

Parts I, II, III, IV and V of the SEZ Act were proclaimed on January 31, 2022. These Parts will facilitate the establishment of the SEZ Authority which is the first step in the implementation of the SEZ Legislation. During Fiscal 2023, the MTI continued to work with the Chief Parliamentary Counsel of the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance to finalise the SEZ Regulations and the Incentives Framework, while the Board of the SEZ Authority continued to work for the creation of a robust and effective regulatory authority.

b) Magdalena Grand Beach Hotel Upgrade

The Magdalena Grand Beach and Golf Resort (MGBGR) is a 22-acre oceanfront parcel of land on the windward side of Tobago which currently employs approximately two hundred (200) persons. The hotel has a 178-room capacity (including 22 suites) with an 18-hole golf course; an on-site Spa (leased); 6,000 sq. ft. of Meeting/Convention Space; multiple on-site Restaurants; Tennis Court; multiple Outdoor Swimming Pools; and a Fitness Room.

The last renovation to the hotel was in 2012 and since then, the rooms have undergone regular cleaning and maintenance that is customary with maintaining hotel standards. However, to ensure that Tobago can be promoted as a prime tourist destination with first-class accommodation, the Government has undertaken much needed upgrades and repairs.

Some key works that have been completed or are in train include:

- the refurbishment of the north satellite pool; architectural, civil and structural upgrades; mechanical, electrical and plumbing upgrades;
- upgrades to the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system; repairs to the passenger elevators;
- the repairs and purchase of furniture, fixtures and equipment to a total of 40 rooms throughout the hotel in preparation of international events, including the Caribbean Classic Golf Tournament in July 2023 and the Commonwealth Youth Games in August 2023, where the Magdalena was the location for the Commonwealth Village in Tobago; and
- Upgrade and refurbishment of the Golf Course.

5.8.3 Facilitation of Investments

a) Operational Investments:

In Fiscal 2023, the MTI and investTT facilitated thirteen (13) investments valued at TT\$264.3 million which became operational across various non-energy sectors: Agriculture; Manufacturing; Agro-processing; Service/Entertainment; ICT; and BPO. Seven (7) of the thirteen (13) investments were LDIs valued at TT\$159.9 million with an estimated one hundred and seventy-eight (178) job opportunities; and six (6) FDIs valued at TT\$86.4 million with an estimated three hundred and fifty-one (351) job opportunities in sub sectors of logistics and distribution, manufacturing, warehousing and retail, agriculture and agro-processing.

b) Closed and Committed Investments:

In Fiscal 2023, MTI and investTT closed seventeen (17) investments valued at TT\$1.5 billion. These investments are expected to generate one thousand, four hundred and fifty-three (1,453) job opportunities. Investments are considered closed when companies have taken decisions to set up operations. These investments included twelve (12) LDIs with a total investment value of TT\$582.5 million with an expected generation of three hundred and sixty-four (364) job opportunities; and five (5) FDIs with a total investment value of TT\$966.3 million with an expected generation of one thousand and eighty-nine

(1,089) job opportunities in sub sectors of BPO, real estate and tourism, logistics and distribution and manufacturing.

c) **Reinvestments:**

During the Fiscal 2023, forty (40) major reinvestments were recorded to the amount of TT\$1.4 billion which are expected to generate at least nine hundred and twenty-three (923) jobs. Reinvestments represent decisions by existing companies to undertake expansion within the local market.

d) **Business Process Outsourcing**

Trinidad and Tobago has a more recent, yet rapidly growing Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry, which consists of a healthy mix of global service providers and domestic players, serving markets locally, across the Caribbean and throughout North and Latin America.

Several major commercial banks have created shared service centres in Trinidad and Tobago in order to service their operations throughout the Caribbean region, allowing them to reduce costs by creating autonomous business units to process multiple functions such as finance, accounting, procurement and human resources. As at Fiscal 2023, there are five (5) companies operating in Trinidad and Tobago with employment opportunities to over one thousand, seven hundred and sixty (1,780) persons

Table: Operational BPO Investments

No.	Company	Headquarters	Current No. of Staff (Employment Opportunities)
1	iQOR (Tamana, Chaguanas, Barataria)	USA	1,700
2	Call Centre Pros (Port-of-Spain)	USA	35
3	Bill Gosling (Port-of-Spain)	Canada	20
4	DirecOne	T&T	TBD
5	Ascensos	United Kingdom	25
TOTAL			1,780

e) Manufacturing Tax Credit

To further incentivize and create a more agile and robust manufacturing sector, the Minister of Finance, in the Fiscal 2023 National Budget introduced a one-time manufacturing tax credit. This incentive targeted companies which invest in new machinery, production lines and equipment in the year 2023.

This manufacturing tax credit, which is up to a maximum of TT\$50,000.00, can be utilised against the corporation tax liability of the approved manufacturing company, certified by the Ministry with the responsibility for Trade and Industry. This incentive was legislated via the Finance (No. 2) Act, 2022 and was effective from 1st January, 2023.

Sixteen (16) persons expressed interest for the Manufacturing Tax Credit and the MTI received two (2) applications from the Food and Drink Processing; and Printing and Publishing sub sectors which are being processed.

f) Income Tax Exemption

The Government views private sector investments as a crucial factor to stimulate the economy. In this regard, to incentivize the private sector in an attempt to promote investments, *Section 45D (1) (a) of the Income Tax Act*, Chapter 75:01 provides for an exemption from income tax until December 31, 2025, in respect of premiums and rents derived from the lease of a newly constructed commercial building or multi-storey car park, the construction of which commenced on or after October 1, 2012.

Additionally, *Section 45D (1) (b) of the Income Tax Act*, Chapter 75:01 provides for an exemption from income tax until December 31, 2025, in respect of gains and profits from the initial sale of a newly-constructed commercial building or multi-storey car park, the construction of which commenced on or after October 1, 2012.

In Fiscal 2023, the MTI received four (4) applications for Income Tax Exemptions. Three (3) of these applications were approved and one (1) is being processed. The commercial buildings of the successful applicants represent a total investment value of over TT\$38 million.

5.9 Protection and Empowerment of Consumers

In Fiscal 2023, Consumer Affairs Division (CAD) continued their drive in the execution of the following activities:

5.9.1 Consumer Complaints and Resolutions

The CAD addresses enquires/complaints and resolves cases from consumers when suppliers refuse to offer appropriate redress for goods that failed to perform the functions for which they were designed.

In Fiscal 2023, six hundred and eighty-seven (687) cases were reported of which CAD resolved six hundred and forty-two (642) and responded to three thousand, one hundred and twenty (3,120) enquiries. The resolution of redress in monetary terms for consumers was two million, one hundred and fifteen thousand, three hundred and sixty-six dollars and forty-six cents (\$2,115,366.46) which entailed either exchange of goods, repairs, full refund, partial refund and credit notes as identified in the table below:

Table: Resolution of Redress for Fiscal 2023

Number of Enquiries Responded to as at September 30, 2023				
Telephone Enquiry	Walk in Enquiry	Facebook Enquiry	E-mail Enquiry	Total Enquiry
1867	225	325	703	3120
Number of complaints received and resolved as at September 2022				
Received	Resolved	Percentage		
687	642	93.45%		
Monetary Value of Resolutions				
\$2,115,366.46				

5.9.2 Consumer Awareness Programme

In Fiscal 2023, the CAD maintained an active Facebook platform as part of its consumer awareness and education function. Over the indicated period, subscribership to the page continued to experience gradual, steady growth with a 13.7% increase (2,271 new subscribers/followers) taking the subscribership to 18,886 followers. The CAD's audience

comprises persons generally between the ages of 25 – 44 years with a majority 72.8% female and a minority 27.2% male. This platform also increased its overall reach by 26% from 288,907 persons in Fiscal 2022 to 363,014 persons in Fiscal 2023; and received a total of 401 enquiries via social media for the Fiscal 2023. Additionally, CAD created an additional social media platform on Instagram and this account accrued 281 followers by the end of Fiscal 2023.

5.9.3 World Consumer Rights Day

On March 15, 2023 the CAD joined the rest of the world to commemorate World Consumer Rights Day, which is a time of global collaboration in highlighting consumer rights, protection, empowerment and raising awareness of emerging consumer trends. The theme for this year's celebration was '**Empowering Consumers Through Clean Energy Transitions.**' The CAD planned and executed three activities: a webinar, an outreach and eight lecture sessions in March 2023, to celebrate the Occasion.

- **Webinar**

On WCRD, CAD hosted a webinar titled '**Empowering Consumers through Clean Energy Transitions.**' As the basis of the theme centered on clean energy and energy transitions, the CAD collaborated with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and the Ministry of Planning and Development (Environmental Management Authority), to produce a webinar. The key consumer messages revolved around the elimination of the six barriers that stood in the way of transformative consumer actions, as defined by Consumer's International, which included:

- Knowledge Values and Awareness
- Availability and Affordability
- Reliability and Safety
- Implementation
- Use
- Repair and Redress

The question-and-answer segment fielded 12 questions and comments from participants and three requests for recordings of the webinar. The Communications

Unit of the MTI advised that the public participation was 60 persons due to the late advertisement.

- **Television appearance**

CAD engaged in a pre-recorded courtesy television interview on March 3, 2023 which appeared on TTT on WCRD to sensitize consumers about WCRD 2023 and the functions of the CAD.

- **In Person Lectures**

The CAD conducted lectures at seven (7) centers of the Civillian Conservation Corps throughout Trinidad and Tobago and TTARP. Nine hundred and forty-five (945) persons benefited from these lecture sessions which focused on consumers' rights and responsibilities as well as consumers' right to a Healthy and sustainable environment.

- **Outreach**

Commemoration activities for WCRD culminated in an outreach at Gulf City Mall on March 17, 2023. Present were the CAD, TTEC and the Ministry of Planning and Development. Officers were able to interact with the public and share information on a large scale. CAD also had a spin the wheel activity that drew consumers to the booths. In addition, TTEC distributed LED bulbs to their billed consumers, which attracted more people to the booths. This outreach drew a crowd of about 400 members of the public.

- **Social Media**

During March 2023 in commemoration of WCRD 2023, the CAD's social media platform consistently provided content relating to the theme Clean Energy Transitions. This included tips that consumers can use to be more energy efficient in their everyday lives, such as the switch to energy-efficient light bulbs. Further information was given on clean energy incentives provided by the GORTT and ways in which the country is generally moving toward more of these renewable resources. The social media platform provided the link for the webinar as well as the flyer for the outreach.

- **Minister’s WCRD message**

A message from the Minister of Trade and Industry was published in three daily newspapers and on the MTI’s / CAD’s social media platforms.

5.9.4 Adverse Trade Practice Order 2000

Under the Consumer Protection and Safety Act Chapter 82:34, CAD conducted two ATPO exercises during the fiscal year 2023. The ATPO prohibits specific adverse trade practices such as publication, and display of notices of invalid statements and makes it an offence for anyone in the course of a business to engage in such trade practices. The first ATPO exercise was conducted from November 29, 2022 to December 14, 2022 and a total of 382 stores were visited. Of the 382 stores visited, 46 or 12% were found to be in breach of the ATPO by having invalid statements displayed on signage in their store or published on their receipts.

The second ATPO exercise was conducted from May 4 to 24, 2023, in which officers revisited forty-four (44) businesses that were previously in breach of the ATPO. Thirty-nine (39) of the forty-four (44) or 88.6% of the businesses that were revisited are now in compliance with the ATPO. Five (5) or 11.4% of them were still in breach at the time of the revisit. Out of the five that were still in breach of the ATPO, one (1) had the breach on their premises while four (4) had the breach on their receipts and letters were issued to them.

5.9.5 Monitoring the Consumer Environment

The Consumer Protection and Safety Act Chapter 82:34 of 1985 allows for the monitoring of goods and it states that the CAD is responsible for keeping under review *“the carrying on of commercial activities in Trinidad and Tobago which relate to goods supplied to consumers in Trinidad and Tobago or produced with a view to their being so supplied”*. Through this legislative authority, the CAD conducts on a monthly and quarterly price monitoring exercises in various sectors; namely, supermarket, hardware, and poultry from live and processed markets.

In Fiscal 2023, CAD conducted twelve (12) Supermarket Retail Price Surveys and produced twelve (12) Monthly Bulletins which can be accessed on MTI’s website <http://tradeind.gov.tt>.

With respect to Hardware Price Surveys, CAD collaborated with the Consumer Affairs Unit of the Tobago House of Assembly and conducted four (4) quarterly Hardware Retail Price Surveys on selected structural, electrical, plumbing and decorative items. Regarding the Poultry Price Surveys, monthly retail prices were collected from thirty-five (35) poultry shops in six (6) counties across Trinidad from live and processed poultry markets. These reports can also be accessed on MTI's website.

In Fiscal 2023, the CAD commenced Phase I of the Consumer Profile Study. This phase entailed the recruitment of a Market Research Consultant. The CAD received financial and technical proposals from three (3) firms and these were submitted to the Ministry of Trade and Industry's Evaluation Committee for consideration and subsequent selection of the most eligible option.

5.10 Transformed Ministry Performance and Service Delivery

5.10.1 MTI's Monitoring and Evaluation

During Fiscal 2023, the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Unit coordinated and collaborated with relevant departments within the MTI for the development of baselines and key performance indicators to feed into the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Roadmap to Recovery (R2R) and Community Recovery Report (CRR) Monitoring and Evaluation Framework prepared by the Ministry of Planning and Development (MPD). Baselines and KPIs were finalised and submitted to MPD in May 2023.

Additionally, the M&E Unit assisted in the development of Departments' Annual Work Plans of the MTI and monitored same on a monthly basis for the provision of reports; provided advice and assisted with the development of M&E Frameworks on policies and projects, and developed and provided key reports to internal and external stakeholders.

5.10.2 Improving Service Delivery at MTI

In Fiscal 2023, the MTI filled the following vacancies at the Technical and Administrative levels to ensure that the human capital is available to achieve its goal of transforming the Ministry and improving its service delivery:

- Established:
 - 1 Consumer Advocate I
 - 1 Auditor II
 - 5 Clerk IIs
 - 7 Clerk Is
 - Clerk Stenographer IV

- Contract:
 - 1 Director, Legal Services
 - 1 Legal Officer II
 - 1 Trade Analyst
 - 4 SEW Specialists
 - 1 ICT Technical Officer
 - 1 Senior Research Strategist
 - 1 Research Strategist
 - 8 Scrap Metal Inspectors
 - 2 Commercial Attachés
 - 3 Commercial Officers
 - 1 B.O.A I

6.0 Financial Operations

The following tables provide a summary on the capital expenditure of projects under the **Development Programme**; and **Recurrent Expenditure** of the Overseas Market Promotion and Development - Local Manufacturers (Export Booster Initiative Programme) of the MTI and its State Agencies.

At the end of Fiscal 2022/2023, the MTI's **Development Programme Expenditure** to Release by the MOF totalled \$158,339,485 (92%) and MTI's Development Programme Expenditure to Revised Allocation totalled \$57,798,465 (73%) towards the achievements of its projects: Consolidated Fund Expenditure to Release by MOF totalled \$53,525,694 (88%), and Consolidated Fund Expenditure to Revised Allocation totalled \$49,621,256 (52%); and Infrastructural Development Fund (IDF) to Release by MOF totalled \$104,813,791 (94%), and IDF Expenditure to Revised Allocation totalled \$8,177,209.00 (93%).

At the end of Fiscal 2022/2023 **Recurrent Expenditure** of the Overseas Market Promotion – Local Manufacturers (Export Booster Initiative Programme) of the MTI through exporTT to Release totalled \$3,453,787.04 (100%), and EBI Expenditure to Revised Allocation totalled \$2,546,212.96 (57.6%).

Statement of Capital Expenditure Extract as at September 30, 2023							
Project No.	Item/Sub - item/Group/Project	2023 Revised Allocation	Funds Released by the MoF to MTI	Expenditure as at September 30th	Unspent Balance	Percentage of Released Funds Utilised	Percentage of Revised Allocation Funds
F304	Export Capacity Building	\$993,509	\$993,509	\$993,509	\$0.00	100%	100%
R001	Investment Promotion Initiatives and Development	\$1,472,889	\$1,212,914	\$1,212,914	\$0.00	100%	82.4%
R007	Establishment of Research and Development Facility	\$1,026,348	\$1,026,348	\$1,026,348	\$0.00	100%	100%

Statement of Capital Expenditure Extract as at September 30, 2023

Project No.	Item/Sub - item/Group/Project	2023 Revised Allocation	Funds Released by the MoF to MTI	Expenditure as at September 30th	Unspent Balance	Percentage of Released Funds Utilised	Percentage of Revised Allocation Funds
R016	Enhancement of the Single Electronic Window (<i>IDB Loan</i>)	\$40,000,000	\$23,632,506	\$16,611,592.87	\$7,020,913.13	70%	42%
R019	Development of the Music Industry	\$1,748,079	\$1,742,990	\$1,742,990	\$0.00	100%	100%
R021	Development of the Film Industry	\$1,546,950	\$1,494,116	\$1,494,116	\$0.00	100%	97%
R023	Development of the Fashion Industry	\$1,800,000	\$1,654,165	\$1,654,165	\$0.00	100%	92%
R024	National SheTrades Chapter	\$679,378	\$679,378	\$679,378	\$0.00	100%	100%
R028	Establishment of the Trade and Investment Promotion Agency	\$11,307,254	\$288,000	\$288,000	\$0.00	100%	3%
R030	Development of the Eco-friendly Business Sector (Scrap Iron)	\$600,000	\$334,358	\$316,408.69	\$17,949.31	95%	53%
R032	Development of the Steel Pan Manufacturing Sector	\$1,498,391	\$0.00	\$0.00	N/A	N/A	0%
R036	Capacity Building for the T&T Fair Trade Commission	\$500,000	\$132,303	\$132,303	\$0.00	100%	26%

Statement of Capital Expenditure Extract as at September 30, 2023

Project No.	Item/Sub - item/Group/Project	2023 Revised Allocation	Funds Released by the MoF to MTI	Expenditure as at September 30th	Unspent Balance	Percentage of Released Funds Utilised	Percentage of Revised Allocation Funds
R038	Implementation of a National Apprenticeship Programme (Non-Energy Manufacturing Sector)	\$8,034,388	\$8,000,000	\$7,999,994.22	\$5.78	100%	100%
R042	Implementation of the N.A.P. to Combat Illicit Trade	\$1,700,000	\$251,982	\$251,980.20	\$1.80	100%	15%
R044	Conduct of Technical Studies on International Trade	\$600,000	\$250,000	\$244,800	\$5,200	98.0%	41%
R046	Implementation of ScaleUp TT Business Accelerator Programme	\$2,039,764	\$2,039,764	\$2,039,763.25	\$0.75	100%	100%
R047	Establishment of a Special Economic Zones Authority	\$6,000,000	\$1,565,860	\$1,565,860	\$0.00	100%	26%
R048	Implementation of a National Apprenticeship Programme (Wood and Wood Products)	\$5,000,000	\$4,462,389	\$4,372,385.17	\$90,003.83	98%	87%
B222	National Quality Infrastructure Enhancement Programme	\$7,500,000	\$5,432,135	\$5,432,135	\$0.00	100%	72%
B224	TTBS Building Renovation Programme	\$3,000,000	\$2,926,918	\$2,926,918		100%	98%

Statement of Capital Expenditure Extract as at September 30, 2023

Project No.	Item/Sub - item/Group/Project	2023 Revised Allocation	Funds Released by the MoF to MTI	Expenditure as at September 30th	Unspent Balance	Percentage of Released Funds Utilised	Percentage of Revised Allocation Funds
A003	Upgrading of Information Technology and Information Systems at the Ministry of Trade and Industry	\$1,000,000	\$393,750	\$393,750	\$0.00	100%	39%
A008	Inward Investment - Non Petroleum Initiatives	\$4,000,000	\$2,374,977	\$2,146,383.88	\$228,593.12	90%	54%
A020	Implementation of the National e-Commerce Strategy	\$1,000,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	N/A	N/A	0%
A022	Consumer Profile Study	\$100,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	N/A	N/A	0%
Total Consolidated Fund (CF) Projects		\$103,146,950	\$60,888,362	\$53,525,694	\$7,362,661.94	88%	52%
Q293	Wallerfield Industrial and Technological Park (<i>e Teck</i>)	\$622,660	\$561,257	\$561,252.27	\$5	100%	90%
Q303	Single Electronic Window for Trade and Business Facilitation	\$500,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	N/A	0%
Q305	Construction of Moruga Agro-Processing and Light Industrial Park (<i>e Teck</i>)	\$5,971,141	\$5,812,948	\$5,812,938.84	\$9	100%	97%

Statement of Capital Expenditure Extract as at September 30, 2023

Project No.	Item/Sub - item/Group/Project	2023 Revised Allocation	Funds Released by the MoF to MTI	Expenditure as at September 30th	Unspent Balance	Percentage of Released Funds Utilised	Percentage of Revised Allocation Funds
Q308	Upgrade of Drainage and Fire Hydrants at Industrial Estates <i>(e Teck)</i>	\$1,736,501	\$1,580,396	\$1,580,392.73	\$3	100%	91%
Q310	Construction of Tamana Intech Park Transit Hub <i>(e Teck)</i>	\$927,899	\$595,247	\$595,244.57	\$2	100%	64%
Q312	Upgrade to Factory Road Industrial Park Infrastructure <i>(e Teck)</i>	\$4,966,407	\$4,521,372	\$4,521,369.51	\$2	100%	91%
Q314	Renovation of Magdalena Grand Beach and Golf Resort <i>(e Teck)</i>	\$6,371,284	\$6,371,284	\$6,371,278.69	\$5	100%	100%
Q316	Construction of the Phoenix Park Industrial Estate <i>(e Teck)</i>	\$71,648,824	\$71,648,824	\$67,735,784.51	\$3,913,039	94.50%	95%
Q318	Upgrade of Sangster`s Hill Mall – Tobago <i>(e Teck)</i>	\$1,721,622	\$1,721,622	\$1,316,561.83	\$405,060	76.50%	76%

Statement of Capital Expenditure Extract as at September 30, 2023

Project No.	Item/Sub - item/Group/Project	2023 Revised Allocation	Funds Released by the MoF to MTI	Expenditure as at September 30th	Unspent Balance	Percentage of Released Funds Utilised	Percentage of Revised Allocation Funds
Q320	Maintenance and Upkeep of Golf Course at Magdalena <i>(e Teck)</i>	\$2,515,392	\$2,515,392	\$1,607,560.14	\$907,832	63.90%	64%
Q322	Industrial Parks Roads and Drainage Infrastructure Upgrades <i>(e Teck)</i>	\$5,397,498	\$5,397,498	\$4,099,635.50	\$1,297,863	76%	76%
Q324	Implementation of the Hilton Trinidad PIP	\$10,611,772	\$10,611,772	\$10,611,772.00	\$0	100%	100%
Total Infrastructure Development Fund (IDF) Projects		\$112,991,000	\$111,337,612	\$104,813,791	\$6,523,821	94%	93%
Total Development Programme (DP) Projects		\$216,137,950	\$172,225,974	\$158,339,485	\$13,886,488	92%	73%

Statement of Recurrent Expenditure Extract as at September 30, 2023								
Project No.	Sub-Head/Item	Revised Provision \$	Release \$	Balance of Provision \$	Expenditure and Commitment \$	Uncommitted Balance \$	Percentage of Released Funds Utilised	Percentage of Revised Allocation Funds
04/009/30	Overseas Market Promotion and Development - Local Manufacturers (Export Booster Initiative through ExporTT)	6,000,000.00	3,453,790.00	2,546,210.00	3,453,787.04	2,546,210.00	100%	57.6%

7.0 Human Resource Capital

The Human Resources Unit (HRU) is responsible for managing the selection and development of the human capital of the MTI. Therefore, the HRU facilitates the recruitment and development of staff to ensure that a competent talent pool is available to support the execution of the MTI's mandate. The table below provides a summary of total non-contract and contract positions as well as staff employed at the MTI as at September 30, 2023.

Fiscal 2023: Organisational Permanent and Contract Establishments in MTI	
Total Number of Non-Contract positions	268
Actual Number of Persons employed in Established Permanent positions	91
Number of Vacant Established Permanent positions	177
Total Number of Contract Positions	106
Actual Number of Contract Employees currently employed	64
Number of Vacant Contract Positions	42

8.0 Public and Community Relations

1. SheTrades: Celebrating Female Entrepreneurship

In commemoration of International Women’s Day 2023, under the United Nations theme, “DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for gender equality,” the Ministry of Trade and Industry in collaboration with Export TT and the International Trade Centre celebrated the entrepreneurs involved in the SheTrades TT Hub at the Trinidad Hilton on Wednesday 8th March 2023. The SheTrades Hub is a transformative platform that offers invaluable opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago’s female-owned micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.



Delivering the feature address at the event, Senator the Honorable Paula Gopee-Scoon congratulated all the women registered on the SheTrades Platform for taking that first step in incorporating technology into their business to move it forward. The Minister encouraged women to position their businesses to

grow and take advantage of all the opportunities available to realise their potential. She urged, women owned businesses to network and forge alliances, arrange further business to business meetings with potential suppliers and buyers and learn from industry leaders.

2. Trade and Industry Minister tours Profilbau Trading Limited

On Wednesday, 22nd March, 2023, Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry toured Profilbau Trading Limited (Profilbau), located in Barrackpore, South Trinidad.



The Company is a leading manufacturer of iron beams and rebar stirrups, and a supplier of aluminium cladding and other gypsum products used in the construction industry. It is also a distributor for German standard faucets, available under the Profilbau brand, as well

as an exclusive provider of German manufactured Knauf brand of gypsum board and accessories. Owing to its continued aptitude and agility, Profilbau has been attending to the demands of the new era of construction in the local residential and commercial markets, with exports to the regional market.

During the tour of the manufacturing facility, the Honourable Minister took the opportunity to congratulate the company on its achievements and milestones thus far, and encouraged the team to continue making strategic investments. She emphasized the important role companies such as Profilbau play in developing supply chain linkages and synergies with other various industries.

3. Trade Minister participates in the Symbolic Foundation Laying Ceremony for UWI's Chocolate Factory

The Symbolic Foundation Laying Ceremony for the University of the West Indies (UWI) Chocolate Factory took place on Monday 24 April 2023. The event represented a significant milestone for UWI in its commitment to commercializing its innovations in the Cocoa and Chocolate industry.

In addressing the audience, Minister Gopee-Scoon highlighted that the Chocolate Manufacturing facility is a lucrative investment opportunity, as it will build capacity in Trinidad and Tobago to meet the increasing international demand for high value premium cocoa and chocolate products. The Factory will also develop and strengthen linkages in the local Cocoa industry by providing local chocolate artisans with quality certified intermediate inputs for the production of innovative chocolate products, which will enhance the export capacity of the industry.



The Minister also stated that *“this event is another manifestation of the ongoing work by the University, which is in alignment with Government objective to boost capacity in the local Cocoa and Chocolate industry”*. She reiterated that the Government is committed to providing the necessary support and incentives to cocoa farmers, artisans, producers and entrepreneurs, to ensure a sustainable and viable industry that is locally based and internationally renowned.

4. Trade Ministry applauds the Work of AFTT, FilmTT At Film Festival's Opening Gala



Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry, recognised the work of the Africa Film Trinidad and Tobago (AFTT) and its collaboration with Trinidad and Tobago Film Company Limited (FilmTT), during an

Address at the AFTT festival's opening gala held on Wednesday 24 May, 2023 at Central Bank Auditorium, Port of Spain.

The Minister noted that the AFTT festival, now in its ninth year, aims to build capacity in the local film industry through key activities such as film screening, outreach sessions and workshops. Considering that Africa is a powerhouse in the global film industry with a record of 12 countries in the continent submitting films to the Oscar Awards in 2021, the Minister said, "The African film market continues to be of interest to stakeholders from the film industry in Trinidad and Tobago. During the period 2021-2023, 30 African films were submitted to the Oscars which is emblematic of the growth and success of Africa's film industry."

5. Oh Snacks! Minister of Trade and Industry tours ASA Enterprises Limited

On Wednesday, 14 June, 2023, Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry was welcomed by Mr. Arfan Khan, Chief Executive Officer, his son, Mr. Aadil Khan, Director, and their team from ASA Enterprises Limited, as she shared in the company's celebration of its milestone export to Jamaica. This shipment marked the company's highest in terms of export value thus far, and solidifies its penetration of yet another CARICOM market.



The Minister extended her congratulations to the company and its staff, on their fortitude and devotion to not only growing the family business but propelling its exports of local non-energy

manufactured goods. She noted that achievements like these, signal both the vitality and resilience of Trinidad and Tobago's entrepreneurial spirit and the inherent commitment to contributing to the local manufacturing sector. She added that she is always heartened to witness the tangible growth and success of private sector companies.

6. Trade Ministry launched Enhanced TTBizLink Application Software



The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), launched the **Enhanced TTBizLink Application Software** to usher in a new era of efficiency and transparency for businesses navigating the intricate web of trade and business processes. Under the Strengthening of the Single Electronic Window for Trade and Business Facilitation Programme, TTBizlink continues

to revolutionize the landscape of trade and business facilitation for citizens, businesses, and investors.

The enhancement of the platform marks another significant milestone for the Ministry of Trade and Industry which is testimony to the government's commitment to digital transformation and enhanced service delivery. The TTBizLink platform's enhanced features now include, a modernized, mobile responsive and user friendly interface; inherent security features and a self-audit facility, which improves transparency; available data in real time, which aids in decision-making; digital approvals which allow applicants to download signed and stamped approval documents; document verification via QR Code which allows anyone with a mobile phone to verify the authenticity of approval documents issued on TTBizLink; increased processing efficiency and knowledge sharing among multiple agencies; improved interoperability with other government systems such as the Customs and Excise Division ASYCUDA system and the Immigration Division's Border Management System; a pre-payment feature where users can draw down on payments when submitting applications; and most importantly the ability of users to make payments online for permits and licences.

7. Trade Ministry donates pattern-making kits to 50 seamstresses and dressmakers to enhance their skills

The Ministry of Trade and Industry distributed Lutterloh Sewing System kits to 50 seamstresses/ tailors and dressmakers during a brief ceremony held on Thursday 28 September, 2023 at the Jimmy Aboud Building, Port of Spain. The Lutterloh Sewing System technique was



developed by the grandmother of Frank Lutterloh in Germany in 1935 and has become quite popular globally. The method is used to create simple and effective patterns for all sizes and body types and has been successfully adopted in more than 17 countries including in Central and South America and the Caribbean. The kits are complete with 280 designs, instructions and drafting tools.

Growing the fashion industry continues to be a priority within the country's diversification agenda and as such, the Government, through the Ministry of Trade and Industry, continues to support the industry through many programmes and initiatives led by the Trinidad and Tobago Fashion Company Ltd. (Fashion TT).

8. Trade Ministry distributes TT\$3,483,568.60 in Grants to 25 Stakeholders in the Non-energy Sector



On September 15, 2023, Minister of Trade and Industry, Senator the Honorable Paula Gopee-Scoon distributed grant funding to 25 stakeholders totalling TT\$3,483,568.60 during a grant distribution ceremony hosted by the Ministry at its headquarters. As the Ministry of Trade and Industry continues to

pursue its diversification agenda by providing opportunities for growth and expansion to businesses in the non-energy sector funding was disbursed through the Ministry's Grant Fund Facility and the Grant Facility for Micro and Small Enterprises in the Yachting Sector. During the ceremony, Minister Gopee-Scoon also announced the launch of an expanded Steelpan Manufacturing Grant Fund Facility to further support the development of the steelpan industry, and she urged stakeholders to take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

9. MTI staff participates in Arthur Lok Jack's Business Alumni Networking and Business Mixer



In a continued drive to share information about Trinidad and Tobago's Single Electronic Window, TTBizLink, the Trade and Business Information Portal, and the MTI grants and investment incentives, representatives of the Ministry of Trade and Industry participated in the Arthur Lok Jack Global School of Business Alumni Networking and

Business Mixer on October 20, 2023. The event was attended by many entrepreneurs and operators of small, micro and medium enterprises, most of whom expressed a desire to grow in their respective areas of operation.

10. Trade and Investment Convention (TIC) 2023

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) participated in the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) 24th Annual Trade and Investment Convention (TIC) held



from July 20-22, 2023, at the Centre of Excellence, Macoya. Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry delivered the Feature Address at the opening ceremony. She recognised the critical role that the TIC plays in showcasing the country's manufacturing sector and commended the TTMA for making it one of the most anticipated business events each year.

This year's Convention accommodated 260 booths comprising over 350 local, regional and international exhibitors. Countries represented included Barbados, Dominican Republic, Martinique, Jamaica, Dominica, Columbia, St. Kitts and Nevis, the United States and Nigeria. The Minister toured the exhibition floor and interacted with several of the exhibitors.



The MTI took the opportunity to participate in collaboration with its State Agencies to promote several programmes, grants and incentives available which business can tap into.

9.0 The Way Forward

In Fiscal 2023, the MTI will continue to develop and execute policy initiatives approved by Cabinet and seek to execute initiatives designed to support the achievement of its mandate for business, trade, investment and consumer empowerment. These will be as follows:

- Continue the negotiations for the expansion of Partial Scope Trade Agreements between Trinidad and Tobago and Chile.
- Negotiate for the expansion of Partial Scope Trade Agreements with Trinidad and Tobago and Curacao.
- Continue the negotiations for the expansion of preferential access and the removal of non-tariff barriers under the CARICOM and Colombia Trade Agreement.
- Continue the negotiations for the expansion of preferential access and the removal of non-tariff barriers under the Trinidad and Tobago and Panama Partial Scope Trade Agreement.
- Continue to undertake administrative arrangements to operationalise Commercial Offices and Commercial Attachés in selected markets.
- Continue the implementation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on Trade Facilitation.
- Continue the implementation of initiatives within the Action Plan to combat illicit trade in consumer goods.
- Development and implementation of CARICOM Regional Services Strategy (professional, postal and courier; tourism).
- Continue the implementation of initiatives under the Export Booster Initiative.
- Development and implementation of Trinidad and Tobago Trade Strategy 2024-2029.
- Continue the re-negotiations Trinidad and Tobago's WTO Bound Rate.
- Establishment of a Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (TIPA).
- Continue the implementation of the Grant Fund Facility to support small and medium businesses in the manufacturing; agro-processing; and yachting sectors.
- Continue the implementation of the National Apprenticeship Programmes.

- Continue the implementation of various initiatives in the fashion industry aimed at building capacity in different areas in the Fashion industry.
- Continue the implementation of various projects in the music industry aimed at creating new opportunities for artistes in the music industry and address concerns of local stakeholders.
- Continue the implementation of various projects in the film industry aimed at building capacity in different areas, facilitating investment in film productions.
- Enactment and operationalisation of the Special Economic Zones Legislation.
- Negotiations for Reciprocal Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement with the Republic of Ghana; Republic of India.
- Continue the implementation of the National Quality Policy through promotions and other development initiatives such as the establishment of a Trinidad and Tobago Accreditation Services for Conformity Assessment (TTASCA).
- Development and Implementation of the National e-Commerce Strategy.
- Continue the implementation of the Scrap Metal Act and Regulations.
- Launch of the Green Manufacturing Initiative.
- Continue the implementation of the National SheTrades for female entrepreneurs.
- Continue the implementation of Scale Up Trinidad and Tobago Business Accelerator Programme.
- Completion of the New Phoenix Industrial Park in Couva.
- Develop of a new park - Dow Village Industrial Park.
- Tenanting of Industrial Parks.
- Upgrade to Factory Road Industrial Park Infrastructure.
- Renovation of Magdalena Grand Beach and Golf Resort.
- Upgrade of Sangster's Hill Mall - Tobago.
- Continue to upgrade drainage and fire hydrants at all industrial estates.
- Modernisation of the Trade Licence Unit of MTI.
- Facilitation of donors through the Aid for Trade Strategy.
- Continue the implementation of the Research and Development Facility to assist manufacturing and service companies develop innovative products, processes, systems and services.

- Continue the expansion of the roll-out of the DevelopTT Online Platform for online submission and approval of land and building development approvals from Town and Country Planning Division (TCPD) and other development control agencies.
- Continue the strengthening and the expansion of the Single Electronic Window (TTBizLink);
- Continue capacity building for the Trinidad and Tobago Fair Trading Commission.
- Continue the implementation of Consumer protection, Education and Research programmes.

10.0 Conclusion

In Fiscal 2023, the MTI embarked on key initiatives designed to lead and oversee the implementation of the GORTT's policies for trade, business development, investment and consumer empowerment.

The MTI together with its State Agencies' performance has been illustrated through the successful execution of a number of programmes, policies and projects of which resulted in the following:

- i. improvements in the ease of doing business;
- ii. improvements in the national quality infrastructure;
- iii. continued negotiations for partial scope trade agreements;
- iv. facilitation of investments through the expansion of economic infrastructure and tenanting of industrial parks;
- v. strengthening of export capacity through:
 - a. grant funding for MSMEs;
 - b. training programmes;
 - c. engaging in trade missions and trade fairs;
- vi. acceleration of economic diversification in targeted sectors such as
 - a. creative: Fashion, Music and Film;
 - b. yachting sector;
 - c. manufacturing; and
 - d. agriculture and agro-processing

The MTI is keen on improving and sustaining the non-energy sector. It will continue to monitor and pursue initiatives that will contribute to the creation of a stable macro-economic environment to allow improvement of entrepreneurship for both men and women; attraction of investment; expansion of trade; the production of high value products and services that can compete in international markets; and ensure better protection of consumers' interests and rights in a business environment.



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
MINISTRY OF TRADE
AND INDUSTRY

WWW.TRADEIND.GOV.TT
868 . 623 . 2931-4