

# **Launch of the National E-commerce Strategy of Trinidad and Tobago 2025-2030**

Address by Senator the Honourable  
Paula Gopee- Scoon  
Minister of Trade and Industry

**Hilton Trinidad and Conference Center**  
**Wednesday 26 March 2025**  
**10:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.**

Salutations:

- The Honourable Stephan Mc Clashie, Minister of Labour;
- United Nations Resident Coordinator, Ms. Joanna Kazana;
- Mr. Randall Karim, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry and other Permanent Secretaries;
- Mrs. Ava Mahabir- Dass, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry;
- Ms Ina Hodge, UNCTAD;
- Dr. Inshan Meajohn, Chief Executive Officer, iGovTT;
- Specially invited guests;
- Members of the media;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning.

I am pleased to be here this morning to officially launch Trinidad and Tobago's **National E-commerce Strategy for the period 2025-2030**. This Strategy marks a transformative step in building a more robust digital environment and shaping the way business is conducted in Trinidad and Tobago and builds on the National E-commerce Strategy 2017-2021.

Trinidad and Tobago has made significant strides in the e-commerce landscape during and after the pandemic. Most noteworthy is the increase in micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises adopting e-commerce. According to a study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), e-commerce adoption among businesses in Latin America and the Caribbean has been on the rise, and as a result, the region has seen improvements in online shopping adoption.

Several initiatives have significantly contributed to the growth of e-commerce over the years in Trinidad and Tobago, such as the increase in payment gateway options by local banks, and expanded services by payment platforms, ensuring secure and reliable online payment processing services to businesses. Also, the introduction of Visa Debit cards has enabled consumers to make online purchases using their local TTD currency, simplifying the online shopping experience and promoting the use of local e-commerce platforms. Also contributing to this growth, is the significant shift in consumer behaviour in Trinidad and Tobago. Consumers are redirecting their shopping habits towards online purchases where there is variety and for convenience.

The Government recognising the dynamic nature of the digital and e-commerce landscape continues to embark on targeted initiatives to keep the country at the forefront of this ever-advancing environment.

Last month, we saw the launch of the National Digital Transformation Strategy 2024-2027 which complements this Strategy as it speaks to harnessing a digital economy by leveraging an ecosystem which nurtures entrepreneurship and promotes social, macroeconomic and environmental sustainability.

**The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that global e-commerce sales surpassed US\$5.8 trillion in 2023, with developing economies experiencing the fastest growth rates and according to the World Economic Forum, the global digital economy is projected to reach US\$20 trillion by 2027.**

### **Trinidad and Tobago's National E-Commerce Strategy 2025-2030**

The Ministry of Trade and Industry has been working collaboratively with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to develop the National E-commerce Strategy and in just **twelve (12) months**, we have delivered a comprehensive framework designed to position Trinidad and Tobago as a leader in the digital economy - one that will drive innovation, empower businesses, enhance consumer access, and ultimately pave the way for a more inclusive and globally competitive economy.

This Strategy, **the first in the Caribbean developed by UNCTAD**, is a robust document based on the sound results of an eTrade Readiness Assessment. The

Assessment formed part of the methodology to develop the Strategy and analysed seven policy areas which are instrumental to e-commerce and identified gaps and opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago. It highlighted the areas in which Trinidad and Tobago has made significant progress such as robust digital infrastructure with a strong ICT sector, high mobile phone penetration and internet access, a well-established transport infrastructure by road, sea and air and the presence of supportive policies and orders in place to facilitate e-payments.

The vision of the Strategy is centered on achieving **widespread adoption of e-commerce** to enable:

- **businesses** to extend their access to domestic and foreign markets and improve the efficiency of their sales and purchasing processes; and
- **consumers and the Government** increased access to a more diverse range of merchants and products with confidence.

Therefore, the overall strategic mission of the Strategy is **to create and maintain an enabling environment that facilitates and promotes the use of e-commerce in Trinidad and Tobago for domestic and international markets.**

This Strategy prescribes a series of targeted initiatives across four strategic areas of focus to ensure Trinidad and Tobago is able to fully harness the potential of e-commerce by:

- i. **Continuing legal and regulatory development for e-commerce** - this will improve legal certainty and allow for further harmonization regarding electronic transactions, electronic contracts and signatures, cybersecurity and data protection. It also supports cross-border e-commerce and allows for enhanced consumer protection and protection for intellectual property.
- ii. **Developing e-commerce awareness and skills** to ensure that the citizens, businesses and the private sector benefit. It is imperative that we have insights into e-commerce skills needs across all sectors, including through the collection of gender, age, location (rural/urban) and disability disaggregated data as this allows for targeted policy reforms and support programmes.
- iii. **Supporting business adoption of e-commerce** by ensuring that e-payment and logistics services are integrated with low-cost cloud-based e-commerce shopping services. This will encourage and assist MSMEs to set up bank accounts to facilitate increased use of digital payments.
- iv. **Enhancing trade facilitation and logistics to support e-commerce** by improving the throughput of goods by customs and data exchange between customs administrations and by improving the collection and delivery of small parcels in rural areas and reducing the packaging costs for MSMEs.

### **Government support for SME Sector**

We expect that the Strategy will fuel a wave of entrepreneurship and business innovation across Trinidad and Tobago and open doors for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to create new revenue streams and scale their businesses in both the local and global market.

SME development and the creation of an enabling business environment remains a priority for this Government. This is evidenced by the various grants and initiatives

offered by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and through the Trinidad and Tobago Trade and Investment Promotion Agency.

**Over the last ten (10) years, the Government supported the growth and expansion of SMEs. During this period, the MTI distributed four hundred and fourteen (415) grants to SMEs valued at approximately TT\$27.2 million under its ten (10) respective grant facilities.**

### **Strategy Implementation**

The effective implementation of this Strategy will ensure that Trinidad and Tobago is not left behind, it will lay the foundation for an e-commerce eco-system that will unlock opportunities for businesses, entrepreneurs, and consumers alike.

As recognized during the development of the Strategy, the private sector, civil society, international partners, and academic institutions all have a critical role to play. We intend to continue close collaboration during the implementation phase.

Today, we are not only launching the National E-Commerce Strategy but we are also moving swiftly ahead with implementation. Next on the Agenda, we will install the National E-commerce Committee formalising this collaboration, co-chaired by the Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Digital Transformation.

This afternoon we are convening a Development Partners meeting to discuss how we can work together on this initiative and the assistance available, to commence implementation of the activities in the Strategy. Tomorrow morning UNCTAD will conduct the eTrade Reform Tracker Training. The eTrade Reform Tracker is a platform developed by UNCTAD to support national e-commerce committees in coordinating the implementation and monitor the activities of the Strategy.

### **Conclusion**

Our focus is clear, to position Trinidad and Tobago as a leader in e-commerce and digital trade. We are at the most exciting juncture of this strategy, where plans start coming to life and today shows that this is officially underway. The Strategy and constitution of the committee, as well as immediate commencement of training demonstrates the MTI's commitment towards economic growth and empowerment of citizens.

As I close, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the UNCTAD team who worked with consistency and dedication to deliver this Strategy in the shortest time possible, without compromising the robustness of the process.

Special thanks to you, the stakeholders for your valuable contributions throughout the various developmental phases. The collective effort, expertise, and commitment have been invaluable in shaping this Strategy and bringing it to fruition. We look forward to continue working with you to create a strong, inclusive, prosperous, and digitally

connected economy that benefits all of our citizens, enhances our global competitiveness, and drives sustainable growth.

Thank you.