



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade and Industry

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Minister of Trade and Industry reaffirms Government's commitment to women's economic empowerment at International Women's Day SheTrades event

**March 8, 2025:** The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is dedicated to dismantling barriers women entrepreneurs face in accessing economic opportunities and, in its commitment, continues to advance inclusive programmes to enhance the competitiveness of women entrepreneurs at all levels of the economy. Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry, underscored this commitment today while delivering remarks at the SheTrades International Women's Day Seminar and Trade Show, held at the National Racquet Sports Centre in Tacarigua.

The SheTrades Hub in Trinidad and Tobago is a collaboration between the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The global SheTrades Initiative was launched by the International Trade Centre in 2015 to connect, empower, and elevate women entrepreneurs by addressing the constraints they encounter in accessing economic opportunities. In 2020, Trinidad and Tobago was the first Caribbean country to join the SheTrades movement. To date, more than 700 members have registered on the platform.

In her remarks at today's Seminar and Trade Show, Minister Gopee-Scoon underscored the crucial role of women entrepreneurs in Trinidad and Tobago's non-energy sector, emphasizing their contributions to innovation, diversification, and economic growth. She acknowledged some of the key challenges women entrepreneurs face such as limited access to finance, market entry barriers, and systemic gender biases and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to breaking down these barriers through initiatives like SheTrades.

Some of the achievements of the SheTrades Hub since its launch in Trinidad and Tobago include:

- Training of 20 female graduates from the National Entrepreneurship Development Company Limited's (NEDCO) Business Accelerator Programme in export readiness.
- Sponsorship for 55 women to participate in the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) Trade and Investment Convention (TIC) in July 2024.
- Support for 29 women entrepreneurs at the Trinidad and Tobago Agri Expo 2024.
- Multiple webinars conducted by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the Trinidad and Tobago Trade and Investment Promotion Agency to introduce women entrepreneurs to ITC's research tools.

In addition to the SheTrades initiative, Minister Gopee-Scoon also pointed to several government-backed initiatives that continue to support women-led businesses, including the Scale Up Trinidad and Tobago business accelerator programme, the Ministry's Grant Fund

Facility, which to date has benefited over 13 women-led businesses; and the Export Booster Initiative which has provided funding for more than 35 women-led businesses.

Acknowledging the remarkable contributions of the women entrepreneurs in attendance, Minister Gopee-Scoon concluded her remarks with a call to action.

“I encourage you to continue to demonstrate leadership as you shape your future. Take the leap to create and build your distinctive products and services,” she said. “Strengthen your networks and work together, as collaboration is key. It is important to invest in yourself and elevate and expand your knowledge, optimizing the use of information and communication technology including artificial intelligence.”

Pamela Coke-Hamilton, Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, also brought remarks at the event and underscored the critical importance of advancing the stories of women making moves to achieve economic empowerment.

“Today, 45% of Trinidadian women are in the labour force, and for every eight women entrepreneurs, there are 10 men entrepreneurs,” she said. “We’re clearly not at a level playing field yet, but we’re getting closer.”

Ms. Coke-Hamilton said it was a moral and economic imperative to ramp up efforts for women’s economic empowerment and gender equality.

General Manager of Caribbean Bottlers and director of the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Ms. Camille Chattoor, delivered keynote remarks at the event. Ms. Chattoor commended the Ministry of Trade and Industry for its efforts to highlight the role of women in business as she simultaneously urged female entrepreneurs to face business challenges with courage.

“The development of your business is not going to be perfect, and it is not going to be on a straightforward moving trajectory,” she told entrepreneurs in attendance. “It will have ebbs and flows that require you to continue to recalibrate your goals and dig in your heels to push it further and higher.”

Making the point that business issues are complex and require adaptability from entrepreneurs, she added, “When you seize opportunities, your life can be more successful. In business, it means that you will collect no’s as you attempt to grow and develop your business. However, yesterday’s no can develop into tomorrow’s yes, so you cannot close the door to potential relationships.”

The SheTrades International Women’s Day Seminar and Trade Show continues to serve as a pivotal platform for fostering dialogue, networking, and business growth opportunities for women entrepreneurs across Trinidad and Tobago.

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**Photo Caption:** Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry (centre), with Ms. Camille Chattoor, General Manager of Caribbean Bottlers and Director of the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce (2<sup>nd</sup> from left), Mr. Randall Karim, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Trade (1<sup>st</sup> from left). To the Minister's right is Mrs. Ava Mahabir-Dass, Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.) in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and Ms. Candice Lackhansingh, Director, Policy and Strategy in the Ministry of Trade and Industry.