



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

World Standards Day 2015

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FEATURE ADDRESS

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MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

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TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO BUREAU OF STANDARDS

Good morning to you all.

INTRODUCTION

It gives me great pleasure to address you here today, at the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards, on the occasion of World Standards Day 2015.

I am honoured to participate in today's celebrations and, in this regard, would like to express my appreciation to the TTBS Board and Management for their kind invitation. As your line Ministry, we at the Ministry of Trade and Industry are particularly delighted to join you on this auspicious occasion and to demonstrate in a tangible way our support for the important work that you do in aiding the development of our country.

World Standards Day is undoubtedly a significant day for the standards community, for the Bureau of Standards, and indeed for all of Trinidad and Tobago. We are keenly aware that, although your work is largely accomplished "behind the scenes", national standards play a major role in supporting national strategies aimed at trade competitiveness, economic diversification and the sustainable development of our country.

We wish to recognize the contribution by all involved in standardization activities.

THE MINISTRY'S ROLE IN DIVERSIFICATION AND TRADE

As we are all well aware, Trinidad and Tobago, like so many other economies around the world, is facing critical economic challenges arising out of changes in the global landscape including significant developments in the Far East and the Middle East. In addition, new trade agreements between important market players, such as the recent Trans-Pacific Trade Agreement, are placing a greater demand on smaller countries to significantly improve their trade competitiveness in order to compete in the global marketplace.

Given the recent drastic fluctuations in the oil and gas prices worldwide and forecasts for a more difficult global environment, we in Trinidad and Tobago are called upon to accelerate our economic diversification efforts in order to reduce our reliance on the oil and gas sector.

Now, more than ever, both the public and private sectors must establish firm partnerships aimed at building strong and productive non-traditional sectors..

Over the years, Trinidad and Tobago has signed numerous trade agreements including several with our Latin American neighbours- Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, Costa Rica , the Dominican Republic, Panama and Guatemala. However, in many instances, we have not realized the full benefits afforded by these agreements clearly our exports have not kept pace.

A key role of the Ministry is to grow our national manufacturing base. In this context, I greatly appreciate the role of standards and quality in building up our national manufacturing, and export capacity. This focus on quality is essential if we are to have our products and services successfully. Your success in this regard will go a long way in ensuring higher quality, and greater demand for, our locally manufactured products whilst ensuring safety and minimum quality in imported products.

I should indicate, though, that although we recognize your role in shaping our national quality and trade

competitiveness, we are also aware that there are other significant national capacity building measures to be addressed. These include increasing our production capacity, improving our labour productivity and accelerating innovation in the development of value-added goods and services as we strive to ramp up our exports.

THE MANDATE OF TTBS IN TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

TTBS, as a major player in the quality arena, has the responsibility to develop, promote and enforce standards in order to:

- improve the quality and performance of goods produced or used in Trinidad and Tobago;
- improve industrial efficiency and development
- promote public and industrial welfare, health and safety; and
- protect the environment.

While the TTBS has a critical role with respect to trade facilitation, there are other facets of your mandate that bears on Sustainable Development. As you are no doubt aware, sustainable development encompasses everything from societal security, protection of the environment, health and safety and addressing climate change issues. I understand that TTBS has issued several standards related to the theme of Sustainability, ranging from HSE standards (in factories and workplace), renewable energy and energy efficiency standards (for housing and commercial developments), social responsibility and building accessibility.

Global discussions have focused on issues relating to global warming, climate change, food and water security, disaster management, as well as societal well-being and security issues. Standards can play a pivotal role in addressing these global issues by providing a mechanism to mitigate risks and implement globally-accepted solutions and systems at the national level. Trinidad and Tobago must therefore continue to be part of the discussions in order to ensure our interests are incorporated in the outcomes.

On another note, I would like to highlight the importance of building codes and standards in ensuring the sustainable development of the country. The development and enforcement of building codes and related standards play a major role in ensuring our physical infrastructure, including our building stock, is fit for purpose, sustainable, safe and accessible to all. The Bureau must play a pivotal role in shaping these codes and standards to ensure that our built environment can withstand the increasingly severe natural disasters that we have thus far been spared from.

On the consumer side, the world is truly a global market. Local manufacturers operate in a highly competitive sphere and with the rapid expansion of e-commerce, consumers are opting to procure a variety of imported and local goods- shopping via the internet. This is especially fashionable among our younger population.

TTBS has a key role in monitoring the quality of goods sold on the local market via its Implementation Division, in order to ensure that products meet the established compulsory national standards. In this regard, the TTBS is expected to play a critical role in the use and enforcement of standards to level the competition among local and foreign suppliers of products to the domestic market.

I also understand that TTBS has successfully launched several new product certification schemes which aid in the enforcement of compulsory standards aimed at ensuring health, safety and environmental

protection. Two recent certifications being in the areas of roofing sheets and Portland cement.

THE MINISTRY AND TTBS WORKING TOGETHER

The Ministry is keen to work with TTBS to ensure the successful execution of its twin mandates under the Standards Act (No. 18 of 1997) and the Metrology Act (No. 18 of 2004). In this regard, we are committed to the successful implementation of the Metrology Act which was only recently proclaimed and the Regulations which are now being brought into effect.

I am confident that Metrology has a significant role to improving our country's ability to produce world-class goods and services, which can be traded globally. Accurate and reliable measurements are vital to the strengthening of our manufacturing sector and national diversification efforts. An accurate measurement system is a key element in stimulating investor confidence and ultimately export diversification.

Let me assure you that my Ministry will take a leading role in ensuring the implementation of this important piece of Legislation so that our national institutions and the private sector can take advantage of a world class system of measurement that is internationally recognized.

Beyond metrology, the TTBS will be required to forge synergies in the area of standards between the TTBS and the Chemistry Food and Drugs Division in order to cover the full range of consumer items including food and non-food items as the nation works to improve its overall standard of living.

Also, given the importance of the partnership between Trinidad and Tobago and CARICOM, TTBS is being relied upon to play a leadership role in the regional institution, CROSQ, in advancing the body of regional standards. This work is critical to advance trade in the Caribbean region, the commercial relationships provided for in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and to promote the competitiveness of regional industries in the global marketplace.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry supports the good work that TTBS has been doing in all the other areas of your mandate. In particular, we look forward to the effective implementation of ISO 17020, which speaks to the accreditation of inspection bodies and to our direct efforts to fully establish TTLABS as an independent entity.

We are confident that you will continue to undertake the relevant plans, projects and programmes that support the strategic direction of the Ministry and by extension, the Government and the country. We express our support for the overall development of the National Quality Infrastructure which is an important element in the framework required to build a more diversified economy and to improve the economic outlook for the nation.

We are particularly interested in the innovative role of TTBS in adapting standards to address the

particular needs of Trinidad and Tobago. In this context, I make reference to the issue of developing standards for “rolling gates” to provide some protection for vulnerable members of our society and in particular our children in order to avoid the tragic incidents which occur from time to time. I urge the speedy completion of the programme of work to complete this initiative.

In closing, I wish you tremendous success as we celebrate World Standards Day 2015 and look forward to an exciting and rewarding time working with you to achieve our national objectives.

Ladies and Gentlemen - I thank you!