



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

*Capacity Building Within The Caribbean
Forum of ACP States (CARIFORUM) in the
areas of Competition, Public Procurement
and Customs and Trade Facilitation in
Support of the Implementation of the
CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership
Agreement(EPA)*

**CUSTOMS AND TRADE FACILITATION
TRAINING**

.....
OPENING REMARKS

MS. KARLENE ROACH

DEPUTY PERMANENT SECRETARY (Ag.)

MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
.....

18 MAY 2016

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO CUSTOMS AND EXCISE DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, LEVEL 3, AJAX STREET

Good Morning,

It is with honor and indeed pleasure that I stand today to deliver the opening remarks at this workshop entitled: **“Customs and Trade Facilitation Training In Support of the Implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) ”**

As many of you may be aware, The CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) was signed in October 2008 and is being provisionally applied since December 29, 2008.

The EPA aims to promote trade and investment between both groupings in an effort to enhance sustainable growth, employment and development. It takes into account the socio-economic circumstances in CARIFORUM States by offering asymmetric rights and obligations, specific safeguards, as well as, transition periods for taking on commitments. The EPA also promotes dialogue and co-operation in areas such as technical barriers to trade, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures, **competition, procurement, and customs and trade facilitation.**

Trinidad and Tobago’s Government’s Policy Framework is focused on maximizing the benefits and opportunities under the EPA; as such capacity building in customs and trade facilitation is critical to enable Trinidad and Tobago to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the EPA.

The training will enhance the human, legal and institutional capacity of both the public and private sector, to better allow Trinidad and Tobago to honour its commitment and attain the objectives of the EPA.

The EU is a significant export partner. As of 2014, the EU was our third ranked export market, accounting for 17% of Trinidad and Tobago’s goods exports, behind CARICOM at 18% and the USA for 44% of total exports. This may not seem very significant but the trends tell a different story. From 2010 to 2012, the EU’s share of Trinidad and Tobago’s goods exports increased from 12.3% to 17%, while the US’ share dropped from 52% to 44%.

I am very pleased at the interest displayed by our various stakeholders, who have accepted the Ministry’s invitation to be here today as research and awareness activities play a critical role in addressing the obstacles and therefore increasing exports.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry would like to thank the CARIFORUM Secretariat and consultants at Equinoccio for their hard work in the development of this Project and of course, the European Union for providing the funding. We are grateful for the cooperation and collaboration in organizing and planning the event.

In closing, I would like to urge you the participants to take full advantage of the session offered here today as we move forward together towards the successful and efficient implementation of the Economic Partnership Agreement.

I thank you.