



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

EUROCHAMTT Breakfast Seminar

EUROPEAN BUSINESS CHAMBER IN
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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R E M A R K S

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MINISTER, MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

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Good Morning

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to join you at this very important breakfast seminar under the theme “Exploring the Opportunities with European Business in Commercial Maritime Sector in Trinidad and Tobago” which is a timely one. I wish to commend the European Business Chamber in Trinidad and Tobago (EUROCHAMTT) for the role it continues to play in facilitating European business in Trinidad and Tobago since its inception.

The European Union (EU) is an important trading partner for this country. The EU was ranked as this country’s third largest trading partner for exports in 2016, accounting for 12% of Trinidad and Tobago’s exports ahead of CARICOM which stood at 11% of total exports. Total exports to the EU accounted for over TT\$8 billion in 2015 and over TT\$ 5 billion in 2016. Total imports from the EU accounted for over TT\$7 billion or 13% of total imports for Trinidad and Tobago in 2016¹.

The top three (3) products exported from Trinidad and Tobago to the EU are Iron Ore, Methanol and Liquefied Natural Gas. The top three (3) countries for exports to the EU for the period January to September 2010 to 2015 were Spain, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. However, it is necessary for local exporters to consider new markets outside of the traditional European partners and explore the opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago’s goods and services to penetrate new markets in Europe.

To facilitate easier trade with the EU, Trinidad and Tobago has provisionally applied the CARIFORUM – EU Economic Partnership Agreement since December 29, 2008. One of the main objectives of the Agreement is to encourage exports of non-energy goods to the EU market. The EPA also contains provisions related to the services sector which augur well for domestic service providers seeking access to the European Union as well as the EU maritime service providers interested in doing business in Trinidad and Tobago.

We recognize Europe’s strong and well established expertise in maritime matters. You are aware that there are several European companies that operate locally including:

- Bourbon Trinidad Limited (French, specialized Boat Operations for offshore Oil and Gas industry);
- Fugro Survey Caribbean (Dutch, Seismic surveys);
- Oldendorff Carriers Trinidad and Tobago Limited (German, major Shipping and Transshipment of specialized cargo);
- Saipem (Italian, Drilling Services and Engineering & Construction);
- Damen Shipyards Group (Dutch, Shipbuilding and Ship Repair and Maintenance);
- Van Oord (Dutch, Dredging Company); and
- Peterson Integrated Logistics TT Ltd. (Dutch, Logistics Company).

As part of the economic diversification thrust, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has prioritized the Maritime Sector for further development. The strategic advantages that make this country ideal for maritime activities are many, not least of which is our geographic location below the hurricane belt. We are situated between key trade routes connecting North and South America and can boast of a highly skilled work force.

¹ Central Statistical Office of Trinidad and Tobago

As a key institution charged with the responsibility to develop and grow trade and investments, the Ministry of Trade and Industry is tasked with developing the Maritime Sector. To this end, within the last year:

- A Framework for the Development of the Maritime Sector has been completed; and
- A Standing Committee to oversee the development of the maritime sector has been established.

This Standing Committee will streamline the initiatives undertaken by the Government Ministries and Agencies involved in implementation of the Maritime Framework. We believe that this mechanism will significantly propel and advance the work that is necessary given that its membership comprises Government Ministers, and the Heads of all the relevant public and private sector organizations that have a role to play including the Maritime Services Division, the Customs and Excise Division and the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. The Standing Committee is guided by a number of key functions, including facilitating the sourcing of financing for the industry, fast tracking regulatory approvals and promoting capacity building, training and apprenticeship arrangements.

The Government is keen on ensuring an inclusive, multi-pronged approach as we advance development in this area. In this regard, there are a number of initiatives in progress in the maritime sector and I will mention some here:

1. The development of a Maritime Apprenticeship Programme.

A Maritime Apprenticeship programme was launched in December 2016 and entails a full time one year on-the-job training in Welding and Ship Hull Fabricating. The programme targets persons between the ages of 18 to 35 years. 18 young men are currently being trained with opportunities for employment on completion. This is a collaborative effort between YTEPP Limited (under the purview of the Ministry of Education) and Caribbean Dockyard and Engineering Services Limited (CARIDOC/CL Marine). This Maritime Apprenticeship Programme is a prototype that can be replicated at other ship repair and dry docking facilities to increase the number of skilled labor in the Ship Repair and Dry Docking industry.

This Maritime Apprenticeship Programme supplements the programmes offered by the Maritime Campus of the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) which include the Diploma in Maritime Operations (Engineering or Navigation), Bachelor of Science Degree in Maritime Operations and Master of Science in Operational Maritime Management. The Seafarer programmes and Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) short course are accredited by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) of the United Kingdom. The graduates of the maritime programmes are all absorbed into the sector locally and abroad.

2. Single Electronic Window (SEW) e-maritime Module

As some of you may be aware, the Single Electronic Window (SEW) e-maritime module allows shipping agents in Trinidad and Tobago to electronically prepare and submit vessel pre-arrival and pre-departure declarations to the Maritime Services Division, Coast Guard, Customs and Excise Division, Port Administrations, Immigration Division and Ministry of Health. Once submitted, the information is immediately sent to these agencies. The e-maritime module has contributed to:

- Increased efficiency in the preparation of arrival and departure declarations for shipping agents.
- Cost savings resulting from less paperwork and documentary requirements due to electronic submissions.
- Overall reduction in vessel dwell time due to electronic clearance.
- Improved communication and coordination between shipping agents and regulatory agencies.
- Greater transparency in doing business with regulatory agencies.

3. The development of a Trade Logistics Framework for Trinidad and Tobago

At the Ministry of Trade and Industry, one of the projects under the current Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) loan for the strengthening of the Single Electronic Window (SEW) is the development of a Trade Logistics Framework for Trinidad and Tobago. This will link all the actors in the logistics and supply chain (ports, customs, hauliers, shipping agents, freight forwarders and regulatory agencies) and so further strengthen and streamline our trade processes. The Ministry of Trade and Industry is currently undertaking stakeholder consultations to support this project.

4. The development of a Framework for the Expansion of activities in the Gulf of Paria including Transshipment

The Maritime Services Division of the Ministry of Works and Transport has developed guidelines for the legal, institutional and administrative framework for the expansion of transshipment and other activities in Trinidad and Tobago. The Guidelines will soon be sent to Cabinet for consideration.

5. The sourcing of finance for the expansion of the ship repair and dry docking facilities

The Ministry of Trade and Industry has brought together the ship repair and dry docking companies and a regional financial institution - the Andean Development Bank (Corporacion Andina de Formento - CAF) on financing options for the expansion of their operations. The Ministry plans to host another Investor Financing Engagement Session with key stakeholders in the near future.

ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

The Government is aware of the importance of proper management of maritime activities to ensure sustainability of our marine resources. In this regard, the following initiatives form part of a larger national plan for environmental preservation;

1. The development of a Maritime Spatial Plan for the Gulf of Paria;
2. The removal of Derelict vessels from the Gulf of Paria; and
3. The development of strategies to address ship energy-efficiency technologies and operations, and the reduction of harmful emissions from ships through the recently established Maritime Technology Cooperation Centre (MTCC) for the Caribbean.

YACHTING

Yachting or leisure marine is also subsumed under the Maritime Sector. In an effort to facilitate the growth of the leisure marine industry, the Ministry of Trade and Industry has completed a Yachting Policy, 2017 – 2021 which has among its objectives, to:

1. Improve and expand Trinidad and Tobago's yachting product; and
2. Reform and strengthen the legal and regulatory framework.

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MARITIME SECTOR

As the Government focuses on the development and expansion of the entire Maritime Sector, many opportunities exist for investment, joint ventures and partnership arrangements. This forum will look at:

- The Panama Canal expansion which is expected to increase the number of Post-Panamax vessels passing through the canal. These larger vessels will likely increase the market for feeder lines in and around the Caribbean increasing the demand for port, bunkering, ship chandlery, ship repair and dry docking services many of which Trinidad and Tobago can provide.

- The Oil discovery off Guyana's coast will continue to be of interest. Just last month the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce led a successful trade mission to Guyana offering a slew of services which this country can provide.

Let me also flag a proposal under consideration concerning the building of a new port facility at Toco. This is to accommodate an inter-island ferry service between Trinidad to Tobago for which additional vessels would be required.

In closing ladies and gentlemen, I give you the assurance that there are many opportunities in the Maritime sector and that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the development of the industry. The Ministry of Trade and Industry stands ready to collaborate with you and other members of the private sector on future initiatives of mutual benefit.

Thank you.