



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

Breakfast and Opening Ceremony

CARIBBEAN SECURITY FORUM

.....

REMARKS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

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21ST SEPTEMBER, 2017

Good morning.

I am pleased to join you today to bring remarks, on behalf of Prime Minister Dr the Honourable Keith Rowley and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Let me take this opportunity to welcome to all visitors who are experts in their field to our twin-island nation and to encourage you to find time to savour some of the country's many attractions and delights. At this time we also join in prayer with our Caribbean brothers and sisters.

The Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Service Industries (TTSCI) and the Global Business Leadership Forum must be commended on bringing to fruition this event aimed at "Developing Strategies to Curb Global and National Threats" with the principal deliverable being to devise a plan that is workable for all stakeholders.

Over the next two days, you will examine restorative justice, asset protection, corruption and technological crime fighting - areas in which the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is actively engaged with regional and our international partners. Our National Development Strategy 2016-2030, more commonly known as Vision 2030, in fact "recognises that collaboration among actors and an integrated approach among many sectors" is a prerequisite to addressing cross-cutting issues such as human security, among others. The areas featuring on the agenda transcend borders such that their transnational characteristics demand a transnational response.

You would know at the regional level, Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), at their 38th Regular Meeting in July this year in Grenada, addressed several security matters among which were:

- key initiatives for combatting transnational organized crime,
- the development of a CARICOM Counter Terrorism Strategy for adoption by the Heads of Government,
- the implementation of border security and management projects and programmes, including the current expansion of the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS)
- the establishment of an Advance Cargo Information System (ACIS) to enhance the safety and security of the peoples of the Region, and
- Legal instruments required to facilitate the co-ordination of the fight against crime including advancing the work on the CARICOM Maritime and Airspace Security Co-operation Agreement.

As the Lead Head of Government for Crime and Security in the region, Trinidad and Tobago continues to play a very integral role. This country also hosts the headquarters of CARICOM's Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS). Security co-operation is therefore a pillar of the integration movement and is inseparably linked to the welfare and prosperity of all CARICOM citizens. It is with a similar spirit of collaboration we are all gathered here today.

I trust that this Forum will address, to some degree, the multidimensional aspect of security in respect of the impact of natural disasters on our member states. The devastation wrought by hurricanes Irma and Maria, within days of each other, dictates such a focus, our people being our very most valuable assets and a return to some level of normalization, is therefore an absolute imperative in the shortest possible time.

I wish to publicly express our profound appreciation to our private sector whose members, in support of the Government's immediate response to the devastation, rapidly mobilized resources to support those negatively impacted by these cataclysmic weather systems. We are really grateful for their ongoing collaboration and selflessness in service to those in need. The TTMA and the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber have had strong resolve to get on board and they have gone beyond the call in this regard. I am thankful for the TTMA and the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber for their efforts.

As Minister of Trade and Industry, I value the deepening of stakeholder relationships and the strengthening of partnerships particularly with the private sector. We recognize as a Government that private sector input, information-sharing and continued consultation are pivotal to attaining our sustainable development objectives.

The Global Business Leadership Forum provides a solid example of unified efforts to advance business through strategic partnership. Trinidad and Tobago is likewise taking deliberate steps to strengthen our regional and international relationships to facilitate cross-border trade and investment through engagement.

We recognize that Trinidad and Tobago remains an attractive destination in which to do business. The country's ease of access to North and South American markets, our very strategic location as a transshipment hub, right of entry to preferential CARICOM and international markets, our low energy costs and developed infrastructure along with our generous fiscal incentives continue to lure investment to these islands.

Trinidad and Tobago has been able to maintain its attractiveness to companies in the services and other sectors primarily due to the state's ability to create and effect sound policy. We continue to enhance the domestic investment climate by undertaking a number of administrative and legislative reforms, aimed at improving the ease of doing business and facilitating investment. We have implemented an Investment Approval and Facilitation Framework along with other policies to reinvigorate efforts to create competitive economic spaces for business and investment. We continue, in earnest, to improve trade across borders, simplify procedures for business startup and to utilize technology to ensure an enabling business environment.

In the services sector, as an agency associated with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the TTCSI has successfully contributed constructive recommendations on advancing this important sector.

CONCLUSION

The current global economy requires that we think differently and act decisively. There is a new paradigm and an alternative approach to creating and doing business. It is our hope that the various interest groups and subject matter experts gathered here will develop meaningful, viable and innovative proposals to the issues identified for examination as crime affects business and all of us.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to considering robust proposals which will impact on national development and translate into a better quality of lives for citizens.

And as I close, I take this opportunity to wish you a successful conference and continued best wishes in all future endeavours.

I thank you.