



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

ISO Regional Workshop on Implementing National Standardization Strategies

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FEATURE ADDRESS

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INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to address you at this critical ISO Regional Workshop focused on implementing a National Standardization Strategy. I extend a particularly warm welcome to the presenters from Germany and the United Kingdom and the participants from the CARICOM Member States to our beautiful twin island Republic. Gratitude is also conveyed to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) for their collaborative role in this initiative which is aimed at establishing and aligning the standardization of products and services to national priorities with the intention of enhancing regional and international trade.

EXAMINING STANDARDS

Ladies and gentlemen, there is an irrefutable link between standard setting and trade. According to the ISO, standards ensure products and services are safe, reliable and of good quality. In business, standards are strategic tools that reduce costs, increase productivity and assist companies with accessing new markets. Among developing countries standards serve to level the playing field and facilitate free and fair global trade.

Today standards, continue to play an integral role in both trade and business competitiveness across sectors directed by regional and international partnerships. These arrangements aid in the formulation of guidelines for materials, products, processes and services and also safeguard producers and consumers. Further, standards enhance the interoperability and complementarity of products and services through standardization and regulation.

The evolution and formalization of standard setting over decades have created a robust system which now supports a complex manufacturing and trading regime capable of satisfying the increasing and ubiquitous demands of both business and consumer. The process of measurement, assessment and certification engender confidence and fulfil the essential role of ensuring that goods and services comply with established criteria and also impact positively on the environment and general health, safety and security.

CARICOM

Regional Governments are well aware of the wide reaching benefits of standards and continue to support the engagement of national, regional and international stakeholders in fora such as these to streamline standardization and formulate strategies for the development and rationalization of product and service standards to facilitate trade. In CARICOM, as is the case in the European Union, standards play a lead role in enabling the Caribbean Single Market.

In this regard, this workshop is of great significance to both the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) as the National Standards Body. Trinidad and Tobago is truly delighted to participate in this initiative targeted at the CARICOM Community and aimed at identifying and prioritizing national standardization needs pivotal to our diversification and sustainable development goals.

As CARICOM citizens operating as part of the developing world, local businesses all face challenges competing globally. The reduction in tariff barriers translates into increased competition with the potential to impact manufacturing and other export sectors. It is therefore imperative that regional strategies be executed to improve competitiveness and maximize opportunities created by preferential trade agreements with the aim of successfully penetrating export markets.

Cognizant of this, CARICOM states continue their collaborative efforts to enhance co-operation in the area of standardization through the establishment of centers of excellence in keeping with established industry best practice. These activities build on existing national niches and exploit synergies in areas of expertise and industry. The region's lead agency, the CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) continues to promote efficiency and competitiveness through the process of standardization and the verification of quality among member states with the long term intent of contributing to international competitiveness and economic development.

This approach is also supported by local strategies implemented by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The State's vision of diversifying the export base; increasing global trade share; and effectively integrating the economy into the global trading system is guided by the National Trade Policy and Strategy. To this end the Government is strengthening relationships to improve its trade reputation, while firming up the current regulatory framework. Our National Export Strategy, National Quality Infrastructure Policy and National Services Sector Policy are three elements with the potential to impact and improve both trade and competitiveness of local offerings while also promoting and improving local

standards. Our National Development Strategy Performance Framework also speaks to an improved trade system where local manufacturers and exporters are able to capitalize on increased economic trade routes and international business opportunities; as well as increased entry and penetration of international and regional markets.

TTBS AND THE MTI

Mr Chairman, you will be aware that the Ministry of Trade and Industry is mandated to drive the development of key industries in the non-oil sector. This requires the creation of an enabling environment that fosters entrepreneurship, innovation and competitiveness, the development of supporting policies and the provision of incentives to encourage investment in our nation.

In light of this, standards and quality-related initiatives play a critical role. TTBS is one of the leading institutions in the National Quality System. As mandated under the Standards Act No. 18 of 1997, TTBS will provide the basis for quality assurance, disseminate innovative and more sustainable technologies whilst protecting health, safety and the environment.

In pursuance, TTBS has developed standards in several areas including fashion and textiles, construction, tourism, electrical and mechanical products and consumer goods to fulfil its mandate and contribute to socio-economic transformation. Also, TTBS has developed standards in the area of renewable energy technologies applicable to solar panels and solar water heaters. As a region, a CARICOM Regional Energy Efficiency Building Code is also being developed to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and mitigate against climate change and improve energy security.

TTBS' achievements in the development of our National Quality System will also play a significant role in reaping the benefits of global trading opportunities. Some of the benefits are expected to cover:

1. The development of standards in Chocolate and Confectionery, Chemicals, Personal Care Products and Petroleum Products all areas of great import to the local economy. Both Petroleum and Chemicals constitute a significant portion of Trinidad and Tobago's exports while trade in personal care products and chocolate and confectionery are emerging sectors with substantial trade potential.
2. Improvements to the metrology infrastructure with the establishment of the Caribbean Reference Laboratory (CaRL) for Temperature measurements. As part of the metrology infrastructure, temperature is a key element supporting both oil and gas and manufacturing sectors – two of the country's major economic players. This laboratory will support the national measurement system and wider industrial development in all plants ensuring in the long term, Trinidad and Tobago remains a centre of excellence owing to its strong manufacturing base.
3. The development of a consensus building mechanism in the form of a regional Committee for Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT). This committee will also play a strategic role in developing and providing regional positions on issues impacting regional trade, including manufacturing. Its work is also intended to address strategic national concerns regarding long term sustainability as outlined in vision 2030 in the area of climate change mitigation.
4. The creation of a regional Centre of Excellence for the testing of energy efficient lighting products. It should be noted that work in this area is progressing with feasibility and testing activities ongoing.

These initiatives will support the current and future development of specified regional and national conformity assessment schemes. Further, TTBS, with the support of an EDF funded CROSQ project, will create the first Accredited state-owned Inspection Body in the CARICOM. TTBS is also playing a lead role in International Standards Development through its participation in the ISO Developing Countries Committee (DEVCO), where the needs of small developing countries in the region are represented internationally. Ladies and gentlemen standard setting work continues apace supported by the Government through TTBS.

CONCLUSION

This workshop and other activities being pursued by TTBS provide the avenue for standards to be utilized across all sectors of society. These efforts will ultimately enhance our competitiveness and access to global markets. TTBS' focus on providing efficient, effective and internationally recognized inspection, certification, accreditation and metrology services are necessary if we are to become a centre of excellence in the area of Standards and Quality. Both management and staff are encouraged to actively contribute to inculcating a culture of standards and more broadly attaining the country's development goals. Standards and quality-related initiatives can be used by a wide range of stakeholders from the private sector, the state and civil society to drive economic growth and realize the country's obligations under the UN Sustainable Development Goals. For Trinidad and Tobago, our national level commitment has been expressed in our Vision 2030 roadmap.

I am confident that this workshop will conclude in the development of realistic National Standardization Strategies which are aligned to national and regional priorities and available resources.

In concluding I wish all the participants a successful workshop. This session offers a critical opportunity to identify and prioritize standardization and quality related needs that will enable our CARICOM region to transform our economies. We must all work together to achieve this outcome and build globally competitive industries as we pursue sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen - I thank you!