



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

ASTM International Roadshow on Sustainable Construction

REMARKS

MR. NORRIS HERBERT, PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

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I am pleased to address the participants of today's event which focuses on sustainable construction on behalf of the line Minister with responsibility for trade and industry, Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon who is unavoidably absent this morning. A warm welcome to our country is extended to the ASTM International and the International Code Council (ICC) representatives and commendation is offered to the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) for this strategic collaboration which is happening when the country has commenced roll out of the National Quality Policy. This roadshow, with its consultations, education and outreach components, will not only raise awareness of standards but, as the second of three such activities hosted in the Caribbean Region, it will also support national efforts to increase the competitiveness of our products and services.

Ladies and gentlemen, sustainable development, the centre of today's event, is critical for the improvement of all our industries and sectors. Sustainable construction supports wider sustainable development and involves the efficient, sustainable and cost-effective design and management of buildings, the performance of materials, energy efficiency in buildings and structures, socially-viable environments, flexibility and functionality of buildings and innovative and ethically produced or sourced materials. The increasing demand for more resilient and sustainable buildings in a region faced with catastrophic natural disasters including devastating hurricanes is indicative of the timeliness of this intervention. We have within the Caribbean Community several countries still grappling with the effects of damaged homes and other public infrastructure and utilities from recent devastation.

The outreach and sensitization focus of this activity, which hones in on the growing use of ASTM International standards and International Code Council (ICC) codes which assist companies, regulators and non-governmental organizations with identifying and applying best practices for sustainable construction, will ultimately assist the beneficiary countries of Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Guyana achieve some objectives on their respective economic and sustainable development agendas. Additionally, it leverages longstanding Caribbean partnerships with well-recognized National Standards Bodies in the three countries with focus on how standards and codes lay the foundation for quality and safety in construction projects.

As the National Standard Body, TTBS is responsible for the development, application and promotion of standards that support health, safety and environmental protection, as well as societal well-being and economic development. Therefore, collaboration with this long standing MOU partner, ASTM International is welcomed.

Both ASTM International and the International Code Council are proven leaders in the development of Model Codes and Standards for the construction of safe, resilient and affordable buildings.

As Trinidad and Tobago moves to strengthen the institutional framework and relationships that will govern the implementation of the National Quality Policy, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the TTBS' line ministry, is encouraged by the outcome of the current MOU. TTBS has adopted several ASTM Standards directly supporting the improvement of quality and assurance of safety for building materials and components which are fundamental elements supporting safety, functionality and sustainability of the country's built infrastructure. More importantly, these standards also help to ensure that the country is more resilient in the face of natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes both of which have been increasing in intensity and frequency in recent years.

One of the fundamental components of a more sustainable society is access for all to the built environment. Therefore, based on a collaborative arrangement with the International Code Council, TTBS adopted the 2009 ICC A117.1, Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities in the formulation of the National Accessibility Code. The National Code, it should be noted, is currently being utilized by the Town and Country Planning Division in the construction of elderly homes and by the Archdiocese of Port of Spain to help improve access and use of buildings by elderly persons and persons with disabilities.

The Government has prioritised the development of specific sectors as the drivers of diversification. In this regard, support to manufacturing is linked to a number of strategic initiatives aimed at improving competitiveness including:

1. Implementing an export/trade strategy;
2. Implementing a National Quality Policy, and

3. Administering facilities for innovation and entrepreneurship development.

Sustainable construction is seen as an inescapable element of the stock of capital investments and a core activity in advancement of the National Quality Policy. It is therefore linked to the environment and the support system and can assist our manufacturers in improving their overall business performance and competitiveness.

In light of our national commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, this event is also significant, as it highlights the role of standards for sustainable construction. This roadshow will undoubtedly create a platform for discussion and contribute to standards as a fundamental element for ensuring quality and safety in construction projects.

Ladies and gentlemen, in a period of limited economic growth and resources, we must ensure that our natural resources are utilized efficiently. Sustainability must become more than just a buzzword. We must act, as we seek to collectively achieve the sustainable development goals, we must also minimize the environmental impacts in our normal business operations and construction projects.

Today's session will highlight the fact that standards and conformity assessment solutions provide requirements and general best practices to achieve business outcomes in a more sustainable manner. Standards are a knowledge sharing vehicle representing technical solutions to key issues facing the global community such as smart grids, intelligent transport, sustainable food production, improved resilience to natural disasters and sustainable construction.

The work done at the regional level spearheaded by the CARICOM Regional Organization for Standards and Quality (CROSQ) is therefore noteworthy. CROSQ has led the development of the CARICOM Regional Energy Efficiency Building Code recently approved by the Council for Trade and Economic Development (COTED). This Code is based on the International Code Council's Energy Conservation Code and provides minimum design and construction requirements for energy efficiency as it relates to buildings.

The implementation of this code in Trinidad and Tobago will assist in encouraging more energy efficient practices and sustainable building products reducing the energy costs for the operation and maintenance of public and private buildings. The construction industry both in Trinidad and

Tobago and in the wider CARICOM region, is a significant contributor to this public policy concern.

As we celebrate World Environment Month, there are significant business opportunities for local manufacturers to explore more sustainable building materials and components. Public and private players can address the issues of green construction to minimise our environmental impact as we develop our national building landscape using sustainable building materials and environmentally friendly energy sources.

TTBS has developed national standards in the area of environmental protection, renewable energy and energy efficiency for electrical appliances and lighting products such as LEDs and compact fluorescent lamps.

The application of these standards will significantly reduce contributions to our carbon footprint. In that regard I encourage the TTBS to forge ahead with the development of additional codes and standards particularly the National Building Code which must incorporate sustainable options.

In closing, I would like to emphasise the Government's overall commitment to the development of strategic initiatives aimed at ensuring a healthier environment, improved resilience to the effects of climate change, improved waste management and energy efficiency. This event will undoubtedly provide our construction and engineering practitioners with the knowledge of international best practices embodied in model codes and building standards that can be applied to the construction of safe, resilient and sustainable buildings which can help reduce our carbon footprint, reduce waste and electricity use and utilise more environmentally friendly building materials as we collectively aspire to a more sustainable way of living.

The Government supports the work of standards bodies in collaboratively developing standards to support sustainable construction and encourage firms to conduct their business operations in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. Gratitude is extended our international partners for collaborating with TTBS to host this event and the Ministry of Trade and Industry anticipates similar initiatives in future promoting the use and benefits of standards, fostering

greater resilience and sustainability of our built infrastructure and improving the quality of life of all our citizens.

I thank you.