



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

# *Graduation Ceremony of the 3rd Cohort of International Trade Specialists (ITS)*

REMARKS

MR NORRIS HERBERT - PERMANENT SECRETARY  
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

21<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2018

Good evening.

It is indeed a pleasure to join you this evening for the Graduation Ceremony of the 3rd Cohort of International Trade Specialists. I take this opportunity to extend my sincerest congratulations to the graduating class — you have all performed well and you should be proud of your achievements.

exporTT, as an implementing arm of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, has the very important role of executing the government's trading and business development agenda. I would like to recognize the diligent and visionary persons of exporTT Limited and programme partner, eBSI Export Academy, for the creation of this initiative designed to meet the educational needs of Trinidad and Tobago's exporters.

We at the Ministry of Trade and Industry view this programme as vital to facilitating the expansion of skillsets necessary to boost competence in key areas of international trade, with a focus on exporting.

eBSI's Academy is recognised as a global leader in Online Trade Training, specialising in the delivery of Certified International Trade Programmes and Export Training. The eBSI's academic team has worked with participants and provided structured, guided teaching which you have applied over the course of the program. They have imparted a valuable set of skills and knowledge which are of significant importance to your performance in the trade and international business arenas.

It is necessary to better appreciate and understand international trade in order that, we in Trinidad and Tobago can build more resilient and competitive businesses, and by extension, a stronger economy.

International trade is essential to any economy, not only in terms of the goods and services traded, but in terms of the jobs created, the spread of values and knowledge, and the overall progression and development of countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, given our current economic circumstances, Trinidad and Tobago must be proactive and progressive in pursuing trade and investment. A number of tough economic decisions were made but these will help steer the economy onto the road of recovery and it is expected that Trinidad and Tobago would attain modest growth in 2018.

It is now time that we re-brand ourselves as producers - producers of top quality, highly demanded goods and services for world consumption.

The non-energy sector has performed sluggishly in 2017. Taking and utilizing the knowledge and skills attained in the Programme, the International Trade Specialists here today, have a

critical role to play in improving this performance. You now have the ability to understand and realize these objective by tapping into new markets and forging new trade relationship in which Trinidad and Tobago can be recognized across the globe.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry, guided by Government Policy, continues its focus on pursuing extra regional and non-traditional markets, increasing export capacity and competitiveness of value added goods and services, improving the business and trade-enabling environment and strengthening the Institutional Framework for Trade.

The performance in the economy over the last few years has highlighted the need to focus on diversification of the economy through the export of non-energy products. Trade and the export of non-energy goods and services is what will contribute greatly in piloting our nation into positive growth.

It is this light, we are enhancing market access opportunities with several Latin American countries for the supply of a host of non-energy products. A Partial Scope Trade Agreement with Panama was signed on April 1, 2015 and finalization of agreements with Guatemala and El Salvador are currently ongoing. Whilst talks with Chile have commenced.

In keeping with our Vision 2030 goals the Ministry of Trade and Industry is in the process of completing a Trade Policy and Strategy and a National Export Strategy (NES) which will be finalized following the completion of the Trade Policy and Strategy.

Both documents will serve as a guide for Trinidad and Tobago's export development and trade related initiatives over the next few years.

I encourage you to familiarise yourself with these documents when they have been finalized so you can be fully aware of Trinidad and Tobago's strategic objectives regarding trade and export development.

As newly recognized International Trade Specialists, you all have a critical role to play in building our nation. Exporters can now employ your skills to help them navigate the global trading system. exporTT and the private sector community will now have a wider network of qualified experts to utilize in order to help facilitate trade.

Indeed, 2017 was still a challenging year for the Trinidad and Tobago economy. Our current situation is more encouraging as we look towards a brighter and more prosperous future. This Government remains a partner to all trade related entities and we are ready to do what is necessary to unlock new opportunities and markets, and remove unnecessary and unfair bureaucracy. I look forward to working with all of you as we look towards the shared goal of improved economic prosperity.

In closing, I offer you my sincerest congratulations and I take this opportunity to wish you all the very best in your journey along the path of improved international trade.

I thank you.