



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

*Opening Remarks X
Meeting of the
Red VUCE
(Trade Single Window)*

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

NOVEMBER 13, 2018

Good morning!

Let me first take this opportunity to welcome our visitors to the beautiful twin-island of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. I also wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to you for your participation in these proceedings and to encourage you, schedule permitting, to commit some time to enjoy the nearby sights and sounds of the land of the hummingbird despite your packed agenda.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) is pleased to collaborate with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to host the X Meeting of the Inter-American Network of International Trade Single Windows – more commonly referred to as Red VUCE. The IDB has been an important partner in the development and expansion of Trinidad and Tobago's Single Electronic Window (TTBizLink) and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is thankful to the Bank for the continuous support and expertise.

Although Trinidad and Tobago is a recent member of the Red VUCE fraternity, it has long held a vision of leading economy in the Region in the area of international trade. In this regard, in 2009, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago having identified the need to improve the domestic trade and business facilitation environment launched the Single Electronic Window project and became a pioneer in its own right as the first Caribbean country to embark on this type of technology solution.

After partnering with the Government of Singapore to implement its vision for TTBizlink it was expected that the solution would improve the ease and cost of doing business in Trinidad and Tobago. It was also expected that through the platform there would be greater governmental efficiency, transparency in government services and increased business competitiveness. I am pleased to say that in many respects, many of our expectations have been met.

Today, TTBizlink offers 47 e-government services and can boast of collaborations with eight (8) ministries spanning twenty – four (24) unique public and private sector agencies. We are proud to have been the recipients of the 2013 United Nations Public Service Award for the promotion of Whole –of- Government Approaches in the Information Age; a finalist in the 2014 Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management International Innovation Awards; and the winner of the 2016 Excel Gov Award organized by the network of e-Government Leaders of the Latin America and the Caribbean.

Despite the many successes that TTBizLink has attained, in 2016 the Government was motivated to improve its service delivery by embarking upon the execution of a US \$25 Million IDB funded programme – Strengthening of the SEW for Trade and Business Facilitation aimed at supporting the expansion of TTBizLink. The programme will not only build capacity in the host unit at the MTI but also within key stakeholders by targeting the main problems areas associated with trade and business facilitation. It is also expected, that upon completion of the Programme, Trinidad and Tobago will improve its ranking in the ease of doing business and other international indicators that measure trade and business facilitation, making the country a more attractive place for investment and trade.

The Programme is comprised of three (3) main components with varying projects:

Under Component 1 - enhancing and expanding the services of the Single Electronic Window:

a. Consultancy to develop and implement a risk management system – this will enable officers in the relevant border agencies to make risk based decisions in their day to day border operations using an advanced automated risk management system. This will reduce the time associated with border compliance for importers/ businesses. In addition, there will be improved accuracy and targeting of high risk cargo.

b. Advisory services to assist in the implementation of electronic funds framework – This will facilitate the development of an electronic funds transfer system for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, which will further reduce transaction times and improve service delivery to the public.

c. Develop and implement an automated system for construction permits – this system will re-engineer the existing construction permitting process and move the current manual and paper – based system to an automated online system. This is expected to seamlessly integrate all relevant stakeholders, increase efficiency, and ultimately improve Trinidad and Tobago’s Doing Business ranking in the area of “Dealing with Construction Permits”.

Under Component 2 - enhancing the interoperability of the SEW:

d. Improving the domestic and international interoperability of TTBizLink – This will involve, inter alia, the cross border exchange of trade documentation from Trinidad and Tobago to other main trading partners in Latin America and the Caribbean with a view toward improved

verification of the authenticity of trade documents and efficiency and cost effectiveness for both government and the trading community throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

Under Component 3 - modernizing the governance and the institutional framework of the SEW:

e. Consultancy to review the legislative and institutional framework of the SEW – This consultancy will assist in modernizing the legislative framework and design of an appropriate institutional framework for the areas relating to trade and business. This consultancy will assist the government in its efforts to modernize the legislative framework and design an appropriate institutional framework for the areas relating to trade and business.

f. Consultancy to develop and implement change management in relevant ministries and agencies – This consultancy focuses on a citizen–centric approach to the delivery of TTBizlink e-services through clear standards of service delivery across the agencies to the public, and a mechanism of continuous improvement and innovation in the quality of services delivered by the agencies.

g. Consultancy to undertake business process reengineering – This consultancy is targeted at the simplification, modernization and harmonization of the major regulatory import, export, transit and business facilitation services in Trinidad and Tobago. This should redound to make trade easier and more efficient, which will in turn lead to the country's increase in trade performance and international competitiveness.

Ladies and gentlemen, over the next two (2) days you will be given the opportunity to learn from the experiences of experts and practitioners in the field of Single Electronic Windows including developments in applications, tools for the monitoring of their performance and live demonstrations of these platforms at work. The various panel discussions will also highlight how these applications and solutions can benefit your respective countries in the area of trade facilitation and logistics. I encourage you to take this opportunity to exchange ideas on trade facilitation and share your own experiences to the benefit of your home countries and the wider Latin America and Caribbean Region.

I am also pleased that the organizers of this event have included sessions on new and emerging trends in technology and its impact on international trade such as business intelligence, digital ports and block chain technology. It may interest you to know that the first international trade-

finance transaction on the blockchain occurred only two years ago and involved a shipment of 88 bales of cotton from Texas, USA to Qingdao [CHING-DOW], China. Since then, blockchain technology has become ubiquitous, and will have significant implications for international trade through, among other things, improved data integrity, procedure simplification, increased security, guaranteed confidentiality, proof of integrity for goods in supply chains, and 'self-executing contracts' that would remove the risk of non-payment and reduce the legal and procedural costs of fulfilling a contract.

Some have compared blockchain's transformative nature to that of the Internet, while others have pointed to its ability to bring about only incremental improvements to a broad range of applications. Whatever the impact, blockchain has forced us to re-examine how new technology can be applied, consider how we have underutilized existing technology, and what it means for the future of trade and the way we do things.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry continues to commend the work of IDB and looks forward to this meeting and to engaging with participants toward the strengthening of coordination and regional cooperation between the region's national single electronic windows with a view toward the reduction in time and costs of transactions for imports and exports throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

I thank you.