



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

AMCHAM'S T&T Women's Leadership Conference 2019

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

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Salutations

- Patricia Ghany – President AMCHAM T&T
- CEO Nirad Tewarie and members of the board of AMCHAM
- Rocio Medina Bolivar – Country Head, InterAmerican Development Bank
- Roopa UnniKrishnan - Head Strategy Harman and Author of International Best-Seller ‘The Career Catapult’
- Suzy Teele - Head of Marketing and Communications, Advanced Robotics in Manufacturing Institute
- Other pannelists
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

It is my pleasure to join you today, to stand in a room full of powerful and courageous women who continue to push the envelope of success. Today’s event is a celebration of how far we as women have come and it is an opportunity to revitalise our commitment to breaking societal barriers and creating equal opportunities for future generations.

Just one week ago the world celebrated International Women’s Day with the most appropriate theme “**Balance for Better**” attaching the importance of women internationally in every aspect of society and the balance that is necessary to contribute meaningfully and achieve wholesome and happy lives. This theme sets the impetus for today’s engagement and echoes a clarion call for greater gender parity across the world as we strive to achieve **Sustainable Development Goal 5** which involves the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women globally. In particular, this year’s theme focuses on women and girls to “**Think Equal, Build Smart and Innovate for Change**” and puts innovation by women and girls at the heart of efforts to achieve greater gender equality.

Our world is changing. We are within the 4th Industrial Revolution where technology is rapidly influencing the way we work, communicate and conduct business. Gone are the days when traditional mind-sets of leadership and traditional business models determine success. Businesses are now looking for the right mix to complement technology and innovation.

My research drew me to an article published by Forbes Communications Council entitled, “How the female mind can bring innovation to established industries” wherein it identified women’s ability to multi-task, readily adapt to, adjust and empathise are key characteristics believed to help make companies more successful. The article made reference to the physiological differences between the male and female stating that women multitask, understand situations and empathise better where as men focus, analyse and deliver solutions better.

The article suggests that humanity is the new “killer app” and that female leaders as a result of their strengths are better able to marry humanity with digitization. These characteristics certainly make us a galvanising force that creates innovative thinking and makes us well capable of waking companies out of their slumber.

And, I have to say that I agree. Previously, the characteristics which defined us as soft are some of the defining traits in successful businesses. With the increase of technology businesses now more than ever have to be consumer oriented. Businesses must understand their customers and what drives consumerism – who better than a woman?

Our ability to produce solutions, collaborate and see different perspectives provides us a unique advantage to offer innovative solutions.

However, more change is needed at the top as only 5% of Fortune 1000 companies are led by female CEOs, yet they generate 7% of the total revenue of the organizations on the list and outperform the S&P 500 index over their respective tenures. These figures might well be a close reflection of the status quo in the region and at home.

The power of women has been overlooked by society for quite some time. As of 2013, women represented a growth market more than twice as big as China and India combined, in which they

controlled \$20 trillion in consumer spending, owned or operated 25-33% of private businesses and earned an estimated \$13 trillion. Your spend has tremendous influence and opportunity. The enormity of this consumer market presents opportunities for business and influence. Let us continue to expand this power, determining untapped niches and innovative solutions.

Globally, many initiatives are now focused on achieving increased female participation in the economy.

Within the global trading environment the International Trade Centre (ITC) launched the **SheTrades Initiative** in 2010 to create an ecosystem of integrated solutions that empowers women economically through trade via an app. This Initiative seeks to connect three million women entrepreneurs to market by 2021 by enhancing their competitiveness and creating sustainable connections between buyers, partners and female entrepreneurs. In Nigeria this Initiative was a huge success story with Eclectic Chique, an African inspired accessories brand, based in Lagos, which employs over fifty-five (55) female artisans receiving coaching and support from the initiative. The Company was able to participate in multiple international trade shows where it generated significant sales leads which led to the brand securing a contract and order from a world-wide recognized buyer. Similar programmes must be encouraged as we seek to promote equal gender participation in the economy. AMCHAM's membership programme is to be lauded.

At a time where the world seeks balance, where balance is expected and noticed if absent, let us accept that balance is not just a women's issue, it is also a business issue. As expressed in the International Women's Day Campaign, "the race is on for the gender-balanced boardroom, a gender-balanced Government, gender-balanced media coverage, a gender-balance of employees, more gender-balance in wealth and gender-balanced sports coverage".

This is a global phenomenon which, if we all continue to play our part and lift others along with us, there will be a bright and balanced future where the next generation will contribute greatly to

society. That lifting however, involves mentoring, sharing, forgiving, praising and unity. In building smart, we must adequately ready ourselves to participate effectively in the global sphere through education and continued advancement; building wealth and preparing ourselves for opportunity.

Where are we?

Women in Trinidad and Tobago have made significant advances in all areas of society including the social, economic, cultural, academic, sporting and political spheres. One of the more recent demonstrations of this is in the area of culture and the arts - our Carnival, where, for example, twin sisters Kathy and Karen Norman, band leaders of K2K Alliance earned the “Overall Band of the Year” title for their presentation - “**Through Stained Glass Windows**”. It is the first time that this coveted title has been captured by a female duo, breaking a major gender barrier in the Carnival industry in Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me take the time to acknowledge some more outstanding women who have contributed to our Carnival success.

1. Mas Bands:

- Monique de Nobreiga with the Lost Tribe and the other Tribe bands
- Caro from Ronnie and Caro
- Tracey Andre from Paparazzi
- Rosalind Gabriel – who repeatedly gave us winners of Kiddies Carnival and provided commentary at our shows

2. Beautiful Soca Music:

- Nadia Batson
- Nailah Blackman
- Patrice Roberts

3. Pan

- Panorama Champions, BP Renegades led by Candace Berment
- Pan Trinbago’s President Beverly Ramsey-Moore
- All of the Naparima Girls who were part of the School’s Panorama Champions
- All our elite frontline performers throughout the various steelbands

4. The woman behind our improved Soca Monarch competition, Fay-Ann Lyons-Alvarez
5. All National Carnival activities held under the stewardship of Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts, Minister Nyan Gadsby-Dolly.

Our Carnival dubbed “the greatest show on earth” which continues to contribute considerably to our economy - very much championed by us, the women of Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me speak a bit to the role of the Government. The Government acknowledges the significance of female involvement and gender affairs. You may be aware of the Gender Affairs Unit which is under the purview of the Office of the Prime Minister and spearheaded by a female, Minister the Honourable Ayanna Webster-Roy. The mandate of the Gender Affairs Division is to effectively promote gender equity and gender justice through the process of gender mainstreaming in all Government policies, programmes and projects.

In this regard, the Unit has developed a National Policy on Gender and Development (A Green Paper) 2018. The overall goal of the Policy is to create a gender just society, which is free from discrimination on the basis of sex, in which women and men and boys and girls at all stages of the lifecycle, at all levels, and in all spheres of life, can develop their full potential.

It is envisaged that with the further implementation of Government policy, gender equality and equity will be achieved by the year 2030, which is in keeping with the Government’s National Development Strategy (2016-2030)-Vision 2030; and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Under Vision 2030, the Government recognizes that each individual must be given an equal opportunity to contribute and to self-actualise regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or socio-economic background. The potential is there for creativity and innovation to be the key drivers of personal, social and economic development, but these must be nurtured and encouraged.

Just last Friday in the House of Representatives, on International Women’s Day 2019, the Government launched a National Workplace Policy on Sexual Harassment which was developed by the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (MOLSED). The overall objective of this Policy is to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, identify and address relevant

issues and provide guidance on actions that might be taken by stakeholders in addressing this issue which affects both women and men. This was a long overdue policy and we are pleased that it has been well received by the population.

The Government is doing its part to facilitate and promote the protection of women and to create the much needed balance throughout all sectors. But we each have to collectively do our part. Men, you have to support, trust and encourage women in all their endeavours. Women, you must continue to strive to be the best that you can be, be bold, be daring, be fearless.

But for the women in this room, you have already achieved some measure of success and therefore much falls to you – to lift our women and to improve our country.

So for all in this room, yes we will speak to work and personal balance but because of our very success it is imperative that part of our life is dedicated to building this country; to transforming Trinidad and Tobago and to making it the best place on earth. We each have to do more, not necessarily through politics or business, but simply as a citizen giving service to country and to humanity through volunteerism. Your country needs you. This responsibility must form part of your day to day equation.

Personal

I have spent the last twelve years in politics, a very demanding but rewarding career which forces you to create balance if you wish to remain mentally, spiritually and physically well.

I must be honest, I myself have struggled with maintaining balance but its importance cannot be understated. Family life, friendship, sisterhood and spirituality are major pillars in achieving this balance. Having become a grandmother just over a year ago, I have a renewed sense of the importance of balance. My grandchildren bring me immense joy and I wish to lay a foundation for them – a balanced one for both, but particularly for my granddaughter the perfect mix of power, strength and love. To do this I must also lead by example. Time management is key – you simply must make time for the ones you love and things you love to do. The love of family, friends and God cannot be replaced by money or material things.

We cannot attempt to be part of the quest to achieve and promote gender equality without ensuring that we are willing and able. As such, balance is absolutely essential to achieving success. You simply must be a vessel of mental, spiritual and emotional strength from which to pour out.

The world needs you;
Your country needs you;
Your family needs you;
Your sisters need you.

I thank you.