



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

*Opening Ceremony for 35th
Meeting of the Council of
CROSQ and Workshop
facilitated by Underwriters
Laboratories (UL)*

REMARKS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE SCOON
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

1ST OCTOBER, 2019

SALUTATIONS

- Mr. Lawford Dupres- Chairman of TTBS
 - Mr. Edward Despeignes- Vice Chairperson, TTBS
 - Mr. Derek Luk Pat – Executive Director, TTBS
 - Mr. Deryck Omar- Chief Executive Officer, CROSQ
 - Ms. Maria Iafano, International Standards Manager, Canada, Mexico & Latin America, Underwriters Laboratories Inc.
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- Other Distinguished Guests
 - Management and Staff of the TTBS
 - Members of the media
 - Ladies and gentlemen

Good Morning

Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to address you at the opening ceremony of the 35th Meeting of the Council of CROSQ, the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ). A warm welcome is extended to all participants and in particular those visiting our twin island republic for the first time. I also wish to express appreciation to the Underwriters Laboratories who are facilitating the Technical Workshop being held this afternoon entitled “Building Safe Infrastructure for Electric Vehicles.”

Ladies and gentlemen, the collaboration which we are experiencing between the CARICOM Standards Bodies and the Underwriters Laboratories demonstrates the type of unique opportunities required for regional and local accreditation bodies to address and discuss issues related to the development of much needed quality infrastructure in the Caribbean. Increasingly, pressures both at the level of CARICOM and in Trinidad and Tobago demand that measures be adopted to promote production and enhanced quality; and as a result, significant steps are being taken by regional governments to institute policies intended to guide the development of quality infrastructure.

In the case of the Trinidad and Tobago, our Bureau of Standards (TTBS), has been championing the implementation of our National Quality Policy (NQP) guided by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. This NQP supports our prospects at the diversification and growth of the economy to bring about, improved productivity, increased welfare and environmental protection while contributing to the long-term wellbeing of citizens.

The NQP establishes strategies for the development, strengthening and reform of the domestic Quality Infrastructure by identifying and addressing with urgency the transition and expansion of our businesses, investment and export led trade in the non-energy sector. With its implementation, Trinidad and Tobago now emphasizes the delivery of products and services which are differentiated on the world market place on the basis of quality, value and innovation rather than just price.

We must recognize that quality infrastructure is the foundation for sustainable production and trade of goods and service and that the efficient and competitive production of goods and services is achieved through compliance with regional and international quality requirements.

Trinidad and Tobago Trade Policy

As the Ministry of Trade and Industry pursues initiatives aimed at building globally competitive businesses, in keeping with the country's National Development Strategy Vision 2030, we have recently launched a National Trade Policy 2019 – 2023. This policy articulates the Government's trade-related measures for enhancing competitiveness and accelerating economic and export diversification. In the medium to long term, the Policy sets Trinidad and Tobago on course for delivering broad-based export growth from increased production and trade to create a more diverse and sustainable economy.

Relatedly, the National Trade Policy seeks to harmonise local standards with international requirements by establishing a framework for greater interaction between the government and the private sector. Such resultant synergies are expected to minimise the cost of cross-border trade by improving infrastructure, customs documentation requirements and procedures and also increase capacity locally. Included in the new Trade Policy are areas for improved conformity and alignment with international standards. These include:

- The upgrading and modernization of all components of the national standards infrastructure
- The establishment of an Independent Accreditation Body and the design and implementation of an Accreditation Programme for Public Laboratories
- The upgrading and amendment of national laws to complement local and international requirements
- The registration and certification for targeted professionals involved in international trade
- The pursuit of a Mutual Recognition of Certification Agreement with all trading partners
- Enhancement of the authority of the national standards bodies to enforce compliance with legally-mandated standards and regulations
- Improvements to the capacity of the TTBS to address TBT issues more efficiently, and,
- Benchmarking of trade facilitation agencies and institutionalising international best practices.

From a national perspective the new Trade Policy as it relates to standards is all encompassing.

The MTI is encouraged by the collaboration between the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards and the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) in this initiative today. The association between the parties is in keeping with Government prioritization and vision for energy efficiency optimisation with the establishment of a Cabinet appointed Committee Energy Conservation and Energy Efficiency. This Committee, in keeping with Government's National Development Strategy and the National Environment Policy, is spearheading the development of a five-year action plan for energy efficiency and conservation initiatives in Trinidad and Tobago. It is envisaged that the promotion of these activities will contribute to economic growth, support social development and advance environmental sustainability through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.¹

For us in Trinidad and Tobago the international benchmark and vision established by the International Energy Agency (IEA) in 2018 of a 12% reduction in the gas emissions by 2040 is attainable. Underlying the positive outlook is the energy efficiency potential of countries globally and the report of the IAE that there is an excess of 3 million electric vehicles in circulation as of 2017 and 430,000 publicly available chargers.

One of the interesting elements expected at today's workshop will be an overview of the electric vehicles industry and the importance of safety standards and certification systems, combined with the unravelling of the challenges and solutions for building a safe electric vehicle infrastructure.

I take the opportunity here to make special mention of the rigorous programme of work being undertaken by the TTBS in developing several standards. In this regard it is necessary to point to one of the initiatives pursued by the TTBS, namely the standard for electric vehicles- interconnection requirements. This standard specifies the minimum requirements for the installation and inspection, of electrical wiring intended for the charging of Electric Vehicles (EV) and Plug-in Hybrid Vehicles (PHEV), to ensure the practical safeguarding of persons and property

¹ Article, 2019: "Energy Efficiency Committee begins its work" (news.gov.tt)

from hazards associated with the use of electricity. This standard will be incorporated into the regulatory framework of the Government Electrical Inspectorate.

In ensuring a quality culture in all sectors of Trinidad and Tobago and placing the environment at the centre of social and economic development the government has also revised legislation related to the use of new and used electric vehicles. The fiscal measures in place recognises that electric vehicles imported for private or commercial use according to specifications are not taxed in a manner compatible with reducing gas emissions.

The Government therefore remains committed to developing, strengthening and reforming its National Quality Infrastructure to create a quality culture that supports a diversified and competitive economy. 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. For Trinidad and Tobago, our national level commitment has been expressed in our Vision 2030 roadmap. I am confident that this meeting and the workshop will conclude in the development of pragmatic strategies aligned to national and regional priorities and available resources.

In concluding I wish all the participants a successful day as you prioritize standardize and strengthen the quality related needs that will enable the organisations in our region to transform, work together and achieve an outcome which enable us all to and build and maintain globally competitive industries as we pursue sustainable development. I thank you.