



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

# *National Quality Forum*

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ADDRESS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON  
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

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6<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, 2019

## SALUTATIONS

- His Excellency Arend Biesebroek, Head of the European Union Delegation to Trinidad and Tobago
- Mr. Lawford Dupres – Chairman, Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards (TTBS) and members of the TTBS Board
- Mr. Derek Luk Pat – Executive Director, TTBS
- Mr Gabriel Faria Chief Executive Officer, Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry
- Members of the National Quality Council
- Management and staff of the Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Management and staff of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards
- Stakeholders
- Specially invited guests
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good Morning,

I am pleased to be here to address you at the first National Quality Forum. Our National Quality Policy launched in April 2018, indicated that building awareness of Quality is critical to the success of the implementation of the National Quality Policy. This Forum was identified within the Communications Plan of the Policy, as one of the ways to sensitize all stakeholders, and over time, it is intended to assist with building a strong quality culture in Trinidad and Tobago.

Quality is a common word used in our everyday language and we all know exactly what we mean, when we say, that we want a quality good or service. However, we must understand that quality is not a natural occurrence. The support of an efficient and effective National Quality Infrastructure is necessary to ensure the production of quality goods and services.

Based on the presentation delivered, you would be aware that the National Quality Infrastructure entails;

- the governance structure with the National Quality Policy at the Core;
- Institutions with responsibility for Accreditation, Standardization and Metrology;
- Quality Services for Conformity assessment, this refers to testing, certification and inspection; and
- Quality promotion to build the awareness of consumers.

Ladies and gentlemen, the direction and guidance as to how we embark on this endeavor to strengthen Trinidad and Tobago's National Quality Infrastructure, in a comprehensive and systematic manner, forms our National Quality Policy. It is expected that the implementation of this policy will build the foundation for effective trade.

It is that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is focused on diversifying and increasing its exports, and therefore, we must address the needs of our exporters to face the daunting challenges in accessing markets in the more developed economies and overcome border rejections, enhance global market access, reduce delays associated with testing and certification of products, and reduce cost to ensure competitiveness. Furthermore, in terms of imports, we must protect the interest of consumers and the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

### **Trinidad and Tobago Trade Policy 2019 – 2023**

I am pleased to mention that The National Quality Policy is aligned with the recently launched Trinidad and Tobago Trade Policy 2019 – 2023, Towards Sustainable Economic Growth and Diversification. The Trade Policy states that

the country's international trade has encountered considerable challenges that limit its potential. One such constraint is the issue of non-tariff barriers which have negatively impacted the country's exporters in foreign markets.

With specific regard to accessing international markets, the recommendations of the Trade Policy are consistent with that of the National Quality Policy as it highlights how important a sound quality infrastructure is, in eliminating non-tariff barriers related to quality. The strengthening of the National Quality Infrastructure will therefore ensure that exporters will be able to demonstrate compliance with international quality requirements and trade rules.

### **National Quality Policy and Trade Facilitation**

There is a direct link between Quality and Trade Facilitation. As some of you may be aware Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Trade Facilitation Agreement. The assessment conducted by the WTO indicates that many developing countries require among other things, standardized sets of practices to ensure compliance with international standards, transparent inspection and certification systems and simplified trade to fulfil Trade Facilitation Agreement requirements that relate to sanitary and phytosanitary conditions and technical barriers to trade.

In an effort to address these challenges, the following policy prescriptions were identified in the National Quality Policy:

- upgrading and modernizing all components of the national standards infrastructure;
- establishing an independent accreditation body;
- designing and implementing an accreditation programme for public laboratories;
- upgrading national laws to harmonise local standards with international standards and regulations
- enhancing collaboration amongst national standards bodies; to name a few and some of which are already underway.

The execution of these initiatives will further strengthen the projected goals of the National Quality Policy and enhance collaboration between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the private sector.

### **Quality and Global Value Chains**

Implementing the National Quality Policy and developing the National Quality Infrastructure creates the opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago's manufacturers and service suppliers to attach themselves to Global Value Chains. Trade and production have become increasingly organized around global value chains (IMF WP 19/18). This means that the production of a single export product is now fragmented and distributed across global networks of production. This has offered developing countries greater opportunities to integrate into the global economy (World Bank).

Additionally, global value chains provide a “fast track” to industrialization for emerging economies – joining existing supply chains rather than building them. This removes the need to develop a broad range of production stages domestically.

Having a product tested/inspected through an internationally recognized accredited laboratory adds value because it increases the speed at which goods pass through the border and ensures conformity assessment certificates are accepted on both sides of the border. This provides a significant reduction in costs to the exporter, improving the competitiveness of the product.

Global purchasers demand products and services that meet rigorous and advanced standards of quality to ensure that such products and services integrate flawlessly with others in the supply chain.

Our manufacturers must become versed in global best practices and a supportive internationally recognized quality infrastructure can assure this.

This government has recognized the importance of the role of quality in advancing economic development and diversification and has developed the First National Quality Policy for Trinidad and Tobago. Following this, a National Quality Council was established with the first inaugural meeting held in October 2019. The National Quality Council is paramount, to formulate and implement strategies to raise the quality of products and services exported to the global market. This Council is needed due to the current absence of an effective coordination and monitoring mechanism of quality institutions. It is expected that the National Quality Council will remove the silos that currently exist and allow engagement, collaboration and commitment by all stakeholders including government ministries and agencies, public and private sector representatives, non-governmental organizations and quality institutions, toward the development of a strong, comprehensive National Quality Infrastructure.

In 2019, Cabinet also approved the Establishment of an Independent Accreditation Body for Conformity Assessment (TTASCA). Additionally the development of a national programme for the accreditation of all public laboratories is currently being implemented.

On the Metrology side, an Advisory Committee for Metrology was established and this Committee has been interacting with the TTBS to assess progress with the Metrology Program. In this area, activities have included the verification of fuel dispensers which commenced June, 2018. In 2019, a total of 1809 nozzles were verified, comprising the verification of 1417 nozzles of the National Petroleum Marketing Company (NPMC) service stations and 392 nozzles of UNIPET Company owned service stations. It is noted that 100% compliance in the fuel sector was achieved by the end of June 2019.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards are working to ensure value for money for every citizen.

## **National Quality Forum**

Today's forum is intended to be wide reaching and seeks to build awareness on all tenets of the National Quality Infrastructure. Further, through the presence of key experts, the Forum brings the National Quality Policy to life as it focuses on key areas and sectors covered in the Policy such as regulatory reform, competitiveness, good governance, service excellence, quality in health care, tourism, environmental and energy sustainability and economic diversification. I would like to thank all experts who have given their time to making this forum a success.

Quality requirements are vital for the wellbeing of citizens and other stakeholder groups who place trust in the quality systems as the basis for making important health, environmental, social and economic decisions. The Forum will also convey vital information to stakeholders in Trinidad and Tobago of the importance of a strong quality culture.

According to UNIDO, International trading relationships are built on trust and always have been. Today trust is often built via a structure of standards, agreements, codes and regulations designed to ensure that when we buy something – as businesses or consumers – we get exactly what we expect.

As we continue to build a quality culture in Trinidad and Tobago, remember that there is a lot in it for you;

- it means safer products for you the consumer;
- it means a reduction in costs and technical barriers for you the exporter;
- it means a greater trust in the product being produced which creates opportunities for you the manufacturer or service supplier;
- it means more internationally competitive products and innovation and product development, and greater participation for Trinidad and Tobago which of course has a multiplier effect on the improved, standard of living for every citizen.

This week's gathering of all stakeholders involved in quality management is imperative. Every person, organisation and agency plays an integral role in the implementation of this Policy and developing a robust National Quality Infrastructure.

It is anticipated that over the next two days, we will commence the process for the collaborative effort and multi-stakeholder approach needed to achieve the objectives of the Policy.

Ladies and gentlemen as I close, I again want to underscore the significance of this Forum in our efforts to raise awareness of the importance of a sound quality infrastructure in the creation of globally competitive business and the further diversification of our economy. The success of these projects, however, rests on the support, coordination and responsibility of the various stakeholders present today whether public, private, academia or civil society organisations. Together, we can build a quality conscious society, foster inter-sectoral cooperation and strengthen our national quality infrastructure and culture.

I urge all stakeholders present today to contribute to making this Forum a success and to actualize the vision for a strong quality culture in Trinidad and Tobago. As has been said, quality is not limited to one individual or organization but requires cooperation among all of us.

I thank you and wish you success in your discussions over the next two days.