



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

Second Meeting of the National Aid For Trade Committee

REMARKS

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

26TH MAY, 2020

Salutations

- Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry - Mr Norris Herbert
- Specially invited members of the Donor Community and our International Development Partners Distinguished Members of the National Aid for Trade Monitoring Committee
- Staff of the Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Afternoon to you all.

It gives me great pleasure to address you today at the Second Meeting of the National Aid for Trade Monitoring Committee.

As you may recall, Trinidad and Tobago's Cabinet approved a National Aid for Trade Strategy in 2016, as well as, the establishment of a National Aid for Trade Monitoring Committee. This Strategy is geared towards matching donor funding with the needs of the country to address critical constraints that hinder its capacity to trade. In other words, the Aid for Trade Strategy is the framework for mobilizing resources to address the trade priorities of Trinidad and Tobago.

There is no doubt that the global crisis caused by the pandemic will have significant consequences for trade. Trinidad and Tobago has already experienced a decline in exports during this period as a result of restrictions put in place to curb the spread of the virus, the closure of international borders and shipping and logistical obstacles.

This has resulted in the Aid for Trade Strategy becoming even more relevant as substantial resources are required to address both the issues caused by the pandemic as well as the pre-existing issues hampering trade. Therefore, this meeting of the Aid for Trade monitoring committee along with several Donor Agencies and International Development partners comes at a critical time.

The meeting is expected to facilitate meaningful dialogue between key Ministries, Entities and Donor agencies on measures to overcome the constraint of scarce resources, towards the implementation of projects that focus on Trinidad and Tobago's Trade priorities, thereby improving the ability of manufacturers and service providers to exploit global trading opportunities.

The Aid for Trade Strategy includes a list of trade priorities, under three (3) strategic pillars – Export Diversification, Competitiveness and Trade Facilitation. These priorities were identified by stakeholders as necessary to address the challenges faced in expanding trade in Trinidad and Tobago. Further, the implementation of the Aid for Trade Strategy will assist in identifying funding for projects included under the recently launched Trade Policy for Trinidad and Tobago; the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement; the National Quality Policy and the National Manufacturing Policy.

I am pleased to inform that to date, significant progress was made in the development of several project proposals; the attainment of funding from Donors for some of the projects and the implementation of those Projects.

Funding was secured for the Development of the National Quality Policy under the CSME Standby Facility funded by the 10th European Development Programme and executed by the Caribbean Development Bank AND for the Establishment of the Trinidad and Tobago Accreditation Service for Conformity Assessment funded by the Compete Caribbean Partnership Facility , this project will establish an independent, internationally recognized body that conducts accreditation of testing labs, certification and inspection bodies. The additional project proposals developed cover the areas of trade facilitation and the development of the national quality infrastructure.

This Committee has a crucial role to play in: ensuring that the projects being implemented are effectively monitored to achieve the impact expected; addressing challenges faced in the implementation of projects; and ensuring that the members communicate and collaborate with each other to fast track implementation and avoid delays.

I am aware that the Members of this Committee are part of the line Ministries for various donor agencies and can offer suggestions on possible funding solutions. Moreover, we have several donor agencies present that can indicate their interest in the project proposals prepared, especially for those projects where funding has not yet been identified. Additionally, given that resources are scarce, we must ensure that there is no duplication of efforts and that the aid received is effectively targeted and utilized in a timely manner to achieve the successful outcomes intended.

In this regard, this Meeting will bring the Members of the Committee and the invited Donors up to date on the status of all Projects developed to allow the committee to efficiently undertake its role.

I once again thank you for taking the time to participate in this Meeting and I wish you success in your discussions. I ask that you remain committed to the implementation of our National Aid for Trade Strategy.