



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade and Industry

***Signing of the General
Framework Agreement for the
Negotiation of a Partial Scope
Trade Agreement between the
Republic Of Trinidad And Tobago
and the Republic Of Chile***

FEATURE ADDRESS

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

20TH OCTOBER, 2020

Salutations

- Senator the Honourable Dr. Amery Browne, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs
- His Excellency Juan Aníbal Barría, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Chile;
- Ms. Reita Toussaint, Permanent Secretary (Ag), Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs;
- Mrs. Ayleen Alleyne-Ovid, Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Specially invited guests
- Member of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

It is my honour to participate in this occasion today, on the signing of the *General Framework Agreement for the negotiation of a Partial Scope Trade Agreement between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Republic of Chile*.

This occasion signals the commitment of the Governments of Chile and Trinidad and Tobago towards strengthening bilateral ties and the initiation of a new era in our trading relationship. Trinidad and Tobago and Chile commenced Exploratory Discussions towards a developing preferential trading relationship in 2016, by way of a Cabinet-approved Working Group. The Exploratory Discussions concluded in December 2017 with the preparation of a joint report, listing the benefits of a preferential trading arrangement and an exchange of a preliminary list of products.

Since that time technocrats of both countries have been working to advance to the next phase – negotiations and agreeing on this General Framework Agreement, which serves as the terms of reference for the negotiations.

The Agreement to be signed today outlines the scope of the negotiations of the Partial Scope Trade Agreement, as both sides have given their commitment to negotiate disciplines on:

- Market Access for Goods;
- Rules of Origin and Origin Procedures;
- Trade Facilitation;
- Investment;
- Electronic Trade;
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS);
- Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT);

- Dispute Settlement;
- Trade Remedies;
- Competition Policy; and
- Legal and Institutional Arrangements.

Trinidad and Tobago and Chile share a strong trading relationship, with the trade balance traditionally favoring Trinidad and Tobago. This is evidenced by the fact that over the last five years, Trinidad and Tobago exported on average TT\$ 2.1 billion worth of goods per year to Chile, with annual imports averaging approximately TT\$ 144 million dollars. Exports however, have displayed a downward trend over the period, standing at TT\$ 937 million in 2019, with the top traded products being liquefied natural gas, ammonia, urea and aromatic bitters. Imports from Chile in 2019 amounted to TT\$ 167 million and comprised mainly non-energy items including wood products, frozen salmon, apple juice and tomato paste.

Ladies and gentlemen, the completion of negotiations and the eventual implementation of the Agreement will fulfill the third objective identified in the Trinidad and Tobago Trade Policy 2019-2023, namely to increase market access and penetration for our exports and meet the goal of growing market share within traditional and non-traditional markets. With this arrangement, Trinidad and Tobago aims to diversify exports to the Chilean market, which have primarily been dominated by energy products and also to increase export values. Ultimately we will contribute to the achievement of Government's policy initiatives outlined in the National Development Strategy (Vision 2030), specifically Theme IV- Building Globally Competitive Businesses.

Towards this end, the Partial Scope Trade Agreement will create a framework which would serve five (5) broad objectives:

1. It would allow local companies to enter the Chilean market at preferential rates of duties and source inputs into manufacturing at competitive prices and vice versa.
2. Consumers will benefit from reductions in import duties on selected items.
3. Trinidad and Tobago's exporters will have additional access to a market of over nineteen (19) million persons,
4. It will eliminate non-tariff barriers and
5. Foster cooperation between the countries in mutual areas of interest, including trade facilitation and electronic trade.

In terms of personnel and coordination, I am pleased to advise that Trinidad and Tobago's negotiating team for engagements with Chile will be led by:

- Chief Negotiator - His Excellency Colin Connelly, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to the Kingdom of Belgium; and

- Deputy Chief Negotiator - Ms. Ayleen Ovid, Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry.

The respective negotiating groups will comprise subject-matter experts and technical officers of key Ministries and agencies such as the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, Ministry of Finance including the Customs and Excise Division, Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards and exporTT Limited.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry will coordinate the upcoming negotiations and continue to actively engage the private sector to ensure that the Agreement supports their interests and aids in increasing both energy and non-energy exports to the Chilean market. We have worked closely with the private sector in preparing for this stage and we look forward to greater engagement during the negotiations.

While the COVID-19 virus has stymied economies globally and also affected our progress, we recognize that we must carry on with our work and find innovative ways of achieving our goals. As such, both countries have agreed to conduct negotiations utilizing virtual platforms and we are hopeful that we can commence the First Round of Negotiations in November 2020 and achieve the same and even greater levels of productivity as would be achieved conducting traditional face-to-face negotiations.

In closing, I wish to thank His Excellency Juan Aníbal Barría García, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Chile in Port of Spain, who has been a key driving force in advancing these discussions and an important link with officials in Santiago. Ambassador, I congratulate you on this milestone in our countries' relations and we look forward to continue working with you on this endeavour.

Additionally, I wish to note the efforts championed by the Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs in his former capacity as Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago to Chile. Minister, I commend your team for the excellent arrangements for today's signing ceremony.

It is my hope that we can finalize the Partial Scope Trade Agreement for submission to Cabinet before the end of fiscal year 2021 and with its conclusion, will provide an impetus for increased trade and cooperation in the future.

I thank you.