



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade and Industry

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***First Round of Negotiations
for the Trinidad and
Tobago-Chile Partial Scope
Trade Agreement***

Video Conference

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

AUGUST 17TH, 2021

SALUTATIONS

- His Excellency Rodrigo Yañez, Vice Minister for Trade, Chile
- His Excellency Juan Aníbal Barría García, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Chile to Trinidad and Tobago
- His Excellency Colin Connelly, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Trinidad and Tobago to the Kingdom of Belgium and Trinidad and Tobago's Chief Negotiator
- Mr. Felipe Lopeandía, Director General of Bilateral Economic Affairs, Undersecretariat of International Economic Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile and Chile's Chief Negotiator
- Ms. Ayleen Alleyne-Ovid, Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Trinidad and Tobago's Deputy Chief Negotiator
- Technical Officers of Trinidad and Tobago and Chile
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning.

I am pleased to deliver opening remarks at this, the First Round of Negotiations for the Partial Scope Trade Agreement between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Republic of Chile.

This occasion is a significant milestone in the deepening of bilateral trade relations between our countries, towards which we have been working since the signing of the General Framework Agreement in October 2020. It goes without saying that the global pandemic, has come as a rare and unprecedented event which has challenged the globe and our countries and which requires us to re-assess our national and economic priorities. Although our commencement of these discussions has been delayed as a result, we are pleased to see that we are now advancing to the stage of negotiation, in this virtual realm which has become our new norm.

As we navigate the pandemic, governments around the world are taking steps to mitigate the economic impact and find ways to propel growth. This is also true for Trinidad and Tobago, with the formulation of targeted macroeconomic policies in our *Road Map for Trinidad and Tobago: Transforming to a New Economy and a New Society*.

One of the main areas of transformation for Trinidad and Tobago, is the expansion of the Manufacturing sector, which is the third largest contributor to GDP. The Government is committed to the continued evolution of the sector to one which is globally competitive, productive, and innovative, in the post-Pandemic era. Our Government is focused on promoting and accelerating the export of manufactured goods through Export Promotion, Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening.

As such, it is our hope that this Agreement will provide new market access opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago's manufactured goods. We hope to not only be able to export our manufactured goods at preferential rates to Chile but to also seek inputs into production at competitive prices. The private sector of Trinidad and Tobago has expressed a keen interest in this arrangement and is eager for its fruition.

Trinidad and Tobago and Chile share a very important trading relationship, with the trade balance traditionally favoring Trinidad and Tobago. However, the statistics indicate that Trinidad and Tobago's exports to Chile have been on the decline over the period 2016-2020. In 2020, Trinidad and Tobago's exports to Chile were estimated at TT\$ 333.5 million and were primarily dominated by energy products such as ammonia, liquefied natural gas and urea.

We hope that this Agreement can assist with the diversification of our export base to Chile toward the non-energy sector. Non-energy products exported to Chile in 2020 included aromatic bitters, rum and liquers and cordials. On the import side, trade has been fairly stable over the last five years, with products valued at TT\$ 148 million imported from Chile in 2020. The top imported products included tissue, wood products, clothing, grapes and frozen fish.

We are pleased to be engaging with Chile, which according to the World Economic Forum is the most competitive economy in South America. This Agreement will support Trinidad and Tobago's trade policy which has identified the Central and South American markets for expansion of exports. We also note that Chile is a regional leader in innovation, ranking number one amongst Latin America and the Caribbean in the Global Innovation Index in 2020. As such, we are pleased to be establishing closer relations and look forward to identifying areas where we can partner.

Discussions at this First Round will be held in the areas of market access, rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, trade facilitation, trade remedies, competition policy and legal and institutional issues. While the Parties have agreed that the PSTA will focus mainly on the expansion of trade in goods, I believe that this arrangement will lay the foundation for future collaboration in other areas such as services and investment.

Our team is ready and includes representatives from Ministries with responsibility for Trade and Industry, Energy and Energy Industries, Legal Affairs, Agriculture, Foreign and CARICOM Affairs and Health, as well as the Customs and Excise Division of the Ministry of Finance, the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards and our national export promotion agency exporTT. The Chief Negotiator, His Excellency Colin Connelly, Trinidad and Tobago's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Belgium and Ms. Ayleen Alleyne-Ovid, Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry will

lead the team and I assure you that they are competent leaders who will guide our participation in the negotiations.

Trinidad and Tobago wishes to acknowledge the excellent and cordial relations that we share with His Excellency Juan Anibal Barría, Chile's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Anibal and his predecessor Ambassador Schmidt have been key proponents of this arrangement. We hope to continue to enjoy these good relations and through the Agreement establish new avenues for promoting trade and investment between our countries.

May I extend best wishes for a successful round of negotiations, one that will provide mutually beneficial outcomes for both sides. We would also like to thank the technocrats of Trinidad and Tobago and Chile in advance, for their commitment and hard work over the next three days and look forward to hearing about the progress made.

Thank you.