



Media Release

TRADE MINISTER APPOINTS MEMBERS TO THE NATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION COMMITTEE

September 29, 2021:- Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry today re-appointed members to Trinidad and Tobago's National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) for a further two (2) years over the period August 2021- August 2023. The virtual appointment ceremony also kicked-off the Seventeenth Meeting of the NTFC.

In her remarks, Minister Gopee-Scoon highlighted that ***"the NTFC is a critical mechanism through which Trinidad and Tobago is implementing its commitments under the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement. This objective is not an esoteric one, but one that will impact the ordinary lives of citizens, manufacturers and even government agencies, as goods are more easily released to importers."***

Trinidad and Tobago's NTFC was established in 2016 to among other things, coordinate activities related to the implementation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Trade Facilitation (TFA). The TFA is a multilateral agreement which aims to improve the conditions under which goods are traded by implementing global rules for the movement, release and clearance of goods. Since establishment of the NTFC in 2016, there have been two other terms of appointment.

The NTFC meets quarterly and provides a forum where Ministries, Agencies and organizations coordinate their activities in order to facilitate trade. The NTFC is jointly chaired by Ms. Ayleen Alleyne-Ovid, Permanent Secretary (Ag) of the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) and Ms. Vidya Marcial, Comptroller of Customs and Excise (Ag) and comprises twelve (12) Members with representatives of five (5) Ministries, the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) and

(6) Agencies. The representatives are Ms. Lueandra Neptune, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries; Ms. Karlene Francois, Ministry of Planning and Development; Ms. Carol Hernandez, Ministry of Attorney General and Legal Affairs; Mr. Farz Khan, Ministry of Health; Ms. Shelly Ann Baptiste, Tobago House of Assembly; Mr. Brian Benjamin, exporTT; Mr. Derek Luk Pat – Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards; Ms. Patricia Persad-Wattley, Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago; Ms. Shelly Balkissoon, Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation Limited; and Mr. Emmanuel Baah – Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.

The views of the private sector are also incorporated in decision-making as representatives of organizations such as the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association, Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the American Chamber of Commerce, and the Customs Clerks and Brokers' Association are invited to NTFC meetings.

The discussions at the Meeting focussed on the NTFC's Programme of Activity for the term of appointment, namely activities to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago meets its deadlines for implementation of commitments under the TFA; and that the NTFC continues to monitor ongoing projects including the development of:

- Trade and Business Information Portal – this is a user-friendly portal acting as a central repository for all regulatory information related to trade and business facilitation including imports and exports procedures, policies, legislation, fees etc. This information will be published on the internet.
- Business Process Re-engineering - this project seeks to bring the current major regulatory trade processes in line with international best practices, through simplification, modernization, and harmonization.
- Development of Legislation to give effect to Trinidad and Tobago's obligations under the TFA.

These trade reform projects are taking place under the Inter-American Development Bank loan-funded Project for the Strengthening of the Single Electronic Window for Trade and Business Facilitation.

The NTFC will continue to spearhead trade facilitation reforms in Trinidad and Tobago

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