



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism

The Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the WITCO's Climate-Controlled Finished Goods Warehouse, Champs Fleurs

Remarks

Senator the Honourable Satyakama Maharaj

Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism

Wednesday April 15th, 2026

Salutations

- Minister of Justice & MP for Aranguez / St. Joseph – The Honourable Devesh Maharaj
- Parliamentary Secretary, MTTI - Dr. Colin Neil Gosine
- Deputy Permanent Secretary (Ag.), MTTI – Mr. Neville Alexander
- TTMA President – Mr. Emil Ramkissoon
- WITCO Chairman – Ms. Ingrid Lashley
- WITCO Board Member – Mr. Jason Julien
- TTMA Research Officer – Ms. Ilanka Manrique
- Distinguished Guests
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

A pleasant good morning to you all.

Let me begin by congratulating the West Indian Tobacco Company Limited, its leadership, management and staff, on the opening of this climate-controlled finished goods warehouse facility.

This is an important day for WITCO, and it is also an important signal for Trinidad and Tobago.

Investments of this nature reflect a belief in our country's future and a commitment to strengthening our logistics, distribution, and supply chain capabilities. This facility is a clear statement that WITCO is preparing not just for today, but for tomorrow. It is investing in efficiency, in quality, in resilience and in growth. And it is saying that it believes Trinidad and Tobago remains a place where business can grow, compete and succeed. This confidence is supported by encouraging economic indicators.

According to the latest projections from the World Bank, Trinidad and Tobago's economy is expected to grow from 0.7% in 2026 to 3.2% in 2027. These trends point to a steady recovery and renewed momentum after several years of slower growth.

This investment also reflects exactly the kind of strategic expansion we need if we are to deepen growth in the non-energy sector and build a more resilient economy. At the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism, we have made it clear that our mission is not to manage decline. Our mission is to drive growth, expand investment, strengthen exports, and create conditions for enterprises to flourish.

A central pillar of the Ministry's development strategy is the pursuit of export revenue growth of US\$2 billion by 2027. That is a serious national objective. And it will only be achieved if companies are prepared to invest, improve productivity, modernise operations and compete beyond our borders.

WITCO has already shown that it can play a meaningful role in that effort, with over TT\$800 million in export earnings between 2023 and 2025. That is significant. And this new facility strengthens that capacity even further.

At the Ministry, we also understand that business does not operate in a vacuum. Industry is facing real pressures: global uncertainty, supply chain disruption, rising costs, and increased competition. Those pressures are real. But the response cannot be hesitation. The response has to be investment, adaptation and, building capacity before the pressure builds further.

This facility is not only a practical investment but also a strategic one. It reflects the kind of private sector leadership that helps move an economy forward.

At the same time, the Government has a responsibility to do its part. That is why we are pursuing initiatives to strengthen the business environment, expand exports, improve ease of doing business, and support local enterprise.

Our "Buy Local, Build Trinidad" campaign is part of that effort. It is about encouraging our people to back local production, support local business, and recognise that every time we strengthen domestic enterprise, we strengthen the wider national economy.

We are also deepening engagement with the private sector through mechanisms such as the Export Leadership Team. This Team brings together key stakeholders to provide strategic direction, coordinate export development initiatives, and ensure alignment with our national trade agenda.

At the same time, we are continuing consultations with the business community to improve the ease of doing business, because growth does not come only from ambition. Growth also depends on whether the environment is efficient, responsive and fit for purpose.

As the first of its kind in WITCO's more than 120-year history, this climate-controlled warehouse represents a major step forward in modernizing infrastructure, preserving product quality, and ensuring efficiency in distribution.

It will support business operations, create employment opportunities, and help ensure that goods move seamlessly from manufacturers to consumers. In doing so, it strengthens the foundation for increased exports and long-term economic development. I commend the entire team behind this project and encourage the management and staff who will operate this facility to continue striving for excellence. Your efforts are contributing meaningfully to the advancement of Trinidad and Tobago's economy.

The Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism remains committed to fostering strong partnerships with the business community as we work together to drive economic expansion and attract continued investment.

It is therefore my pleasure to officially declare this warehouse open, and in the same spirit, to reaffirm that Trinidad and Tobago is Open for Business.

Thank you.