



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism

The Entrepreneurship Forum 2026

Hosted By the Entrepreneurship Hub (E-Hub)

Remarks by
Senator the Honourable Satyakama Maharaj
Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism

Wednesday 14th October 2026

SALUTATIONS

- Mr. Kern Philip, Chargé d’Affaires of the U.S. Embassy
- Ms. Ana Suero Santana, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of the Dominican Republic
- Ms. Eva Mitchell, CEO of the Trinidad and Tobago Stock Exchange
- Executive leaders, institutional heads, leading entrepreneurs and distinguished panelists from the IDB, GlobalTT, Trinidad Tourism, CARIRI, NEDCO, EXIM Bank, Unit Trust Corporation, The Bankers Association of Trinidad & Tobago, UWI's Innovation Center, TTCSI, and regional Chambers
- Distinguished guests, valued sponsors, fellow directors and team members of The Entrepreneurship Hub
- Members of the media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

It is a true pleasure to join you here at the Southern Academy for the Performing Arts for the Entrepreneurship Forum 2026. I want to commend the Entrepreneurship Hub (E Hub) for creating a space where ideas, ambition, and practical support meet.

Forums like this are exactly where the next generation of Trinidad and Tobago’s entrepreneurs will find the clarity, confidence, and connections needed to grow.

Entrepreneurship has shaped my entire life. Long before I entered public service, I spent more than four decades building a business from a small idea in San Fernando into a global beauty brand—one that reached customers across continents, pioneered early e commerce in the 1990s, and proved that a company born in Trinidad and Tobago could compete internationally with excellence and authenticity.

So when I stand in rooms like this, I am not speaking to you as a distant policymaker. I am speaking to you as someone who has lived the journey you are on—the long nights, the uncertainty, the breakthroughs, the setbacks, the moments when belief is your only capital, and the moments when your product finally reaches a customer in another country and you realise: We can do this. We belong on the world stage.

Diversification in Action — From Lived Experience to National Strategy

Entrepreneurship is the engine that transformed my own life and the lives of thousands of people I have mentored through Young Entrepreneurs TT. It is also central to the Government’s national economic strategy—our theme: Diversification in Action.

Building a diversified, resilient economy requires the same principles that build a successful business: clarity of purpose, disciplined execution, collaboration, and the courage to innovate.

Our mission at the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism is simple and deeply personal to me: We want to help enterprises move from micro to small, from small to medium, from local to export-ready, and from export-ready to global.

I know what it feels like to make each of those jumps. I also know the friction you face:

- approvals that take too long
- information that is too hard to find
- financing that does not match real cash flow cycles
- and international standards that require structured support.

These are not theoretical issues. They are real barriers that I myself had to overcome.

And that is why we are tackling them head on—through weekly strategic reviews, cross agency coordination, and direct problem solving with ecosystem partners. We are removing bottlenecks because I am well aware of how much they slow down growth.

National Export Targets — Why They Matter to You

Trinidad and Tobago's domestic market is small, but our ambition must never be.

When my company first entered international markets, it was not because the world was waiting for us—it was because we prepared, we innovated, we met global standards, and we refused to limit our vision to our borders.

That same mindset is what will drive our national export strategy.

We are:

- accelerating non energy trade,
- strengthening high potential manufacturing and services sectors,
- and sustaining a robust pipeline of domestic and foreign investment.

This is not policy for policy's sake. It is the same formula that allowed my business to scale globally—and it can work for yours.

National Campaigns & Exporter Support — Practical Tools for Real Entrepreneurs

Through Buy Local, Build Trinbago, we are strengthening homegrown brands so they can scale. Through Global Trinidad and Tobago, we are helping entrepreneurs overcome the exact barriers I once faced: packaging, testing, standards compliance, and market entry.

And we are expanding the definition of exports. Your digital services, creative content, culinary products, wellness offerings, professional expertise—these are all exportable.

If my company could ship beauty products worldwide from Trinidad and Tobago in the 1990s, imagine what you can do today with digital tools, global platforms, and structured support.

Fiscal 2027 — A Budget That Aligns With Your Ambition

Monday's National Budget made one thing clear: Our fiscal strategy is locked onto diversification, private sector empowerment, and foreign exchange generation.

The incentives, programmes, and institutional reforms announced are designed to help you scale—because when entrepreneurs grow, the country grows.

A Call to Action — From One Entrepreneur to Another

To every micro entrepreneur, artisan, designer, consultant, producer, and innovator here today: Government can strengthen the framework, but you transform opportunity into enterprise.

If even a fraction of the entrepreneurs in rooms like this decide to pursue regional and global markets, the impact on foreign exchange, job creation, and community upliftment will be profound.

I have seen firsthand what Trinidad and Tobago's talent can achieve. I have lived the journey from local idea to global brand. And I know that with strong institutional support, digital efficiency, and access to international markets, your possibilities are limitless.

Let us leave this Forum not just inspired, but committed—to the next step, the next market, the next level of excellence.

Now is the time to be Busy about our Business. We are ready for partnership. And together, we will build an economy that is more competitive, more resilient, and richer in opportunity for all.

I thank you, and I wish you a productive and successful Forum.