

**LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL SERVICES EXPORTERS SURVEY 2022
AND NATIONAL SERVICES EXPORTERS PORTAL
FEATURE ADDRESS**

**MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY, SENATOR THE
HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY
TUESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2022
HILTON HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER**

10:00 am – 11:35 pm

Salutations

- Mrs Ayleen Alleyne-Ovid, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Mr. Mark Edgehill, President, Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Services Industries (TTCSI)
- Ms. Vashti Guyadeen, Chief Executive Officer, TTCSI
- Dr Ramesh Ramdeen, Chief Executive Officer, Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association
- Esteemed
- Senior Officials of the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) and ExporTT Limited
- Members of the TTCSI
- Participants of the Gateway to Trade Programme
- Distinguished guests
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning,

I am pleased to deliver today's feature address in celebration of an important milestone in advancing the Services Sector of Trinidad and Tobago marked by the completion of the National Services Exporters Survey (NSES) 2022 and the launch of the National Services Exporters Portal (NSEP). Together these two (2) initiatives will contribute greatly to the overall development of the Sector by alleviating some of our challenges as it relates to the collection of data in services, enhancing our ability to make data driven policy decisions, increasing competitiveness and guaranteeing a more resilient and sustainable industry.

According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), "*Services is a key driver of global trade*" which generates more than two-thirds of global economic output, attracts over two-thirds of foreign direct investment and employs almost two-thirds of the jobs in developing countries. These trends are mirrored regionally, where the Services Sector is one of the more important economic drivers for our regional economy. It is crucial to the provision of strong economic growth and the creation of jobs for Caribbean nationals. According to the CARICOM Secretariat, for the period 2012-2018, the

Regional Sector accounted for 65% of GDP and approximately 75% of employment. Locally, according to Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago (CBTT) data, in 2021, the Services Sector accounted for approximately 64% of GDP and employs 87% of the labour force.

It is also interesting to note that, according to UNCTAD (e-handbook of Statistics 2021), the growth rate of the trade in services among developing economies was faster than that of developed countries. However, despite this significant contribution to global, regional and local GDP, trade in services only accounts for approximately 23% of global exports and 4% of Trinidad and Tobago's total exports in 2021. This figure is not substantial enough and it is clear that the potential of Services exports must be unlocked.

Guided by the National Trade Policy 2019-2023, the Government through the MTI has embarked on a robust agenda to maximize the latent potential of the Services Sector with particular focus on improving the export capacity and competitiveness of the Sector. Key to enhancing the Services Sector is reliable and accurate data.

The Completion of the National Services Exporters Survey 2022 represents the second time in a three-year period that the TTCSI has been able to successfully capture the performance of Services in Trinidad and Tobago.

The 2022 Survey report not only provides information on the export performance and markets of interests of our key Services Sub-Sectors, it also provides pertinent information on some of the major exporting barriers that our exporters face and examines the impact of the pandemic on the Sector. Having access to this information adds to the Ministry's efforts to develop more evidence-based policies and sector development strategies. We are encouraged by the work done by the TTCSI, and I commend you because an exercise such as this is no easy feat given the longstanding challenges in collecting and compiling data on investment, employment, output and trade in services. In general, these challenges are, in part, due to the number of informal agents operating within the Sector, misreporting of transactions, and poor accounting practices to name a few.

In light of this, the Government is working assiduously with local and regional stakeholders to mitigate these challenges.

One such initiative is working alongside CARICOM, to develop a regional project to address the aforementioned challenges and improve the participation of the Private Sector in providing more detailed services trade data.

Also in collaboration with CARICOM, we are pursuing New Export Markets for Services. Work is ongoing to fully utilize certain market access commitments already in place while also working towards the advancement of discussions for a Services chapter to be included in our existing Bi-lateral Trade Agreements between CARICOM and the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica.

Additionally, with respect to trade in services between CARIFORUM and the EU under the CARIFORUM-EU EPA, Trinidad and Tobago agreed to prioritize work on the development of a mechanism to capture services trade data and statistics between the countries. Such a mechanism must adhere to best practice research/classification protocols and address the challenges experienced domestically regarding services data collection such as confidentiality, legislation, and coordination.

Furthermore, as it relates to the Tourism Sub-Sector, Trinidad and Tobago as a part of CARIFORUM, is partnering with EU and the Caribbean Export Development Agency, to diagnose the state of tourism statistics and national accounts systems to develop a Tourism Satellite Accounting (TSA) system. This tool will help ensure a more precise measurement of the Sub-Sector which will allow for data-driven policy decisions using reliable, accurate assessments of the economic value of the Sub-Sector.

The results of the 2022 Survey provide an overview of the economic landscape of the Sector and will play a pivotal role in guiding Government's strategic initiatives for enhancing the Sector. It sampled businesses from a number of Sub-Sectors including, Business and Professional Services, Energy Services, ICT Services, Tourism and Creative Services and was able to capture data on how the industry fared during the Pandemic. Health and Wellness, Aviation and Commercial Maritime/Yachting Services were added to the Survey this year. This Survey and others to come will be the catalyst for sound policy and decision making to strategically guide and develop the Sector.

In examining the results of the Survey, we take note of some of its findings and in particular, the export challenges highlighted by the surveyed companies. The Government recognizes also that penetrating overseas markets is difficult. Getting useful and timely information on potential customers is burdensome and expensive. This is especially so for smaller companies where access to financial assistance may not always be sufficient. I give you the assurance that policy solutions are forthcoming and will be included in the work of the new Trade and Investment Promotion Agency.

National Services Exporters Portal (NSEP)

The Survey is a significant component of the National Services Exporters Portal being launched today. This Portal is a critical tool for the services sector serving as a repository for data in services as well as a registry of businesses within the industry. It will consist of searchable, accurate, comprehensive, and up-to-date information on our local Services Sector. This online platform will bring together, local service providers and potential local and foreign clients and/or partners.

The Portal is expected to transform the local services data landscape through transparency and will foster trust and bring a level of legitimacy to all companies registered on the Platform. Local businesses in the Services Sector will now be able to register their businesses on the Platform, access pertinent information about their industry to make better informed commercial decisions. While the wider population can access reliable and accurate information on registered service providers as well as a body of knowledge relating to the sector for research and general purposes.

Activities arising out of the Portal will include the creation of a local services registry, inward/outward trade missions and proactive media engagement. Market intelligence will also be available on match-making and business to business opportunities for potential investors. Firms registered on the portal will also benefit from engaging with other service sector firms in joint marketing efforts such as branding, market research, and bundling of services to reduce export costs.

In July this year, UNCTAD's Experts on Trade in Services noted that, in contrast to the general drop in services exports on account of the pandemic, exports of digitally-deliverable services have been more resilient and have

been growing consistently in developing countries. On the supply side, new data networks, digital tools, and platforms have enabled services providers to transform the modes of services supply and expand their customer base beyond their national boundaries. By employing e-Commerce technologies, websites, and the ubiquitous presence of the internet, digitally-traded services now more than ever has the potential to reduce the marketing costs of services exporters as well as widen their markets to customers around the world.

It is our hope that the National Services Exporters Portal can act as a gateway between Trinidad and Tobago and the world to promote our services and take advantage of the tremendous opportunities available in the trade of services.

GORTT's Initiatives for the Modernization and Development of the Services Sector

In addition to the Portal, the MTI is also currently implementing several initiatives to support the advancement of the Services Sector with respect to digitization, modernization and general enhancement.

The recently launched Trade and Business Information Portal (TBIP) is an online tool that provides the public with relevant trade and business information such as costs, time, legislative information and contact details for the ministries and agencies associated with specific trade and business procedures. The Trade and Business Information Portal also provides import and export potential analysis tools that can be utilized by businesses to, for example, determine access to export markets. The TBIP is similar to the TTCSI's Portal as they both seek to provide important information to interested parties and help modernize the Non-Energy Sector.

Additionally, to support and create an enabling environment for e-commerce, the Government is in the early stages of negotiating with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) the conduct of an e-Trade Readiness Assessment and development of an E-commerce Strategy. This was prompted by the drastically changed e-commerce landscape due to COVID-19. This assessment should necessarily cover both goods and services.

The GORTT has recently also signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enact a Trade Complaints Mechanism (TCM) with the Government of Jamaica. The TCM is a non-binding agreement intended to provide guidelines for the receipt, transmission, processing and resolution of trade complaints from the exporters of either country. Both Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica have agreed that the TCM will also treat with disputes for the supply of services through Mode 1 (Cross-Border) and Mode 3 (Commercial Presence). This TCM will provide services exporters with a clear set of processes, procedures and timelines as well fixed points of contact for trade complaints. This Mechanism will act as a shield to protect services exporters as they expand their export base in Jamaica.

The Ministry, in its commitment to facilitate the growth of the Services Sector, continues to implement several programmes, initiatives and policy developments, in addition to those offered by the TTCSI, to further stimulate the Sector. These include:

- *Yachting Grant Fund Facility (YGFF)* which provides a one-time cash of TT\$20,000 to TT\$50,000 grant to micro and small enterprises in the Yachting Industry for shipbuilding, repair and maintenance; servicing

of vessels; hospitality services; travel agency services; and yacht brokerage;

- Establishment of *Commercial Offices and Officers* in select markets to provide additional support to our exporters including services exporters and to facilitate the penetration of targeted overseas markets; and
- Establishment of a *Trade and Investment Promotion Agency for Trinidad and Tobago* which will, in part, prioritize the facilitation of increased services exports.

The National Services Exporters Portal will be invaluable in providing the relevant statistics for data-driven policy development as well as promoting the profiles of services exporters. This user-friendly platform represents a significant milestone in the tracking, modernizing, and overall development of our country's Services Sector. The Portal and survey results, together with the other initiatives under the TTCSI's remit, substantially contribute to the national effort to enhance the Services Sector, diversify the country's exports, and build the resilience of this country's economy.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am confident that these initiatives, together with the work of the TTCSI, will go a long way in providing an enabling environment for the Services Sector.

Let me acknowledge the work of the President, Mark Edghill, the Chief Executive Officer, Vashti Guyadeen, and the entire team at the TTCSI for their continued efforts and contribution to transforming the Services Sector in Trinidad and Tobago. I also reaffirm the Government and the Ministry of Trade and Industry's commitment to support the Services Sector and the work of the TTCSI.

I encourage businesses to register today and utilize this Portal as another tool in enhancing your company's competitive advantage.

I wish you all the very best.

Thank you.