

Fit 4 Europe Project Close-off
“Increasing Trade with the European Union”
Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre
November 23, 2016
8.30am to 11.30am

WELCOME REMARKS – INCOMING CHAIRMAN, EXPORTT LTD
MR ASHMEER MOHAMED

Senator, the Honourable, Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry

Dr Ulrich Thiessen, International Cooperation Programme Manager, Delegation of the European Union to Trinidad and Tobago

Mr Clive Vokes, Project Consultant and Director, Market Scoping International

Members of the Board of Directors

Members of the Fit 4 Europe Project – Steering Committee

Management and Staff exporTT Ltd

Members of the Media

Other Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the official closing and dissemination seminar of our Fit 4 Europe Project. This project was earmarked for implementation with donor funding from the European Union over two years, and exporTT was successful in rolling out the project in only 11 months.

This morning's agenda covers an extensive range of topics including the project methodology, the capacity building programme, market research findings from the EU and the business prospects presented by the companies who participated in the mission. Today promises to be an insightful and informative session on doing business in the European Union.

Companies, mainly from the food and beverage sector, have been exporting to the European Union for a number of years. In Trinidad and Tobago, our non-energy exports to the EU consist of food and beverage products inclusive of cocoa and coffee; printing and packaging; construction materials; personal care products; chemicals and musical instruments such as steel pans. Trinidad and Tobago's exports to its major EU trading partner, the UK averaged US\$6.2billion in 2014 and US\$4.3billion in 2016, a decline of over 30%. This represents goods exports only with Food and Beverage as the primary sector. exporTT intends to reverse this trend by diversifying this portfolio of exports, in keeping with its new mandate to cover Services Exports.

A review of the organisation's 3 years of existence shows the accomplishment of several key milestones in its mandate. We have proactively embraced the opportunities and experiences of engaging in these diverse markets thereby enabling us to be a better performing trade promotion organisation that provides a high level of service delivery to the exporters of Trinidad and Tobago.

Our team has been working assiduously on a new strategic plan to change the current trajectory of exports. This undertaking coincides with the completion of our line ministry's strategic plan and of course the appointment of a new board, of which I am privileged to lead. The organization is therefore well aligned to deliver on the trade agenda of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Stakeholders in the export sector would agree that exporTT is an organisation which is necessary to act as that catalyst which drives the export agenda. It does this through its direct activities like the Fit 4 Europe project as well as working closely with our partners in the Export Support Network and of course the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The task of diversifying the country's exports is quite a massive one which will be executed by exporTT in tandem with other stakeholders. It is necessary to work with others even more so in light of less resources. This is not an environment for duplication, inefficiency and ineffectiveness.

The Fit 4 Europe project introduced new modalities such as opportunities for our local producers in co-creation and repositioning in the global value chain, together with a focus on building strong international networks. I should also add that this is one of the few projects which featured a substantial number of participants from the services sector. We were able to experience the plethora of opportunities which exist for this sector internationally and will continue to work with our services exporters and

organisations like TTCSI and CreativeTT to ensure that these opportunities are converted into business.

In conclusion, I should like to wish you, a productive session.

I thank you.

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