



EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

***REMARKS OF Ulrich Thiessen, program manager, at
THE DELEGATION of the EUROPEAN UNION
to TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO***

12 January 2016

- Senator the Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry
- Mr. Adrian Theodore, Chief Executive Officer ExpOrTT,
- Mr. Andrea Power,
- Mr. Clive Vokes,

Specially Invited Guests

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

Thank you very much for the invitation to the launch of the project: *“Developing the Export Readiness of Trinidad & Tobago’s Enterprises for the European Union Market”*.

The Chargé d’Affaires of the Delegation of the EU to Trinidad and Tobago, Ms. Daniela Tramacere, passes her best wishes to you for 2016 and to the implementation of this valuable project under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). Please allow to recall that the EPA was signed in 2008 by the 15 states of the Caricom and the EU’s then 27 countries (today the EU has 28 member states) and that in 2012 a Joint Caribbean EU Partnership Strategy was adopted by both regions. As you may know the EPA is a trade and development partnership with simple goals: to make it easier for both people and businesses from both regions to invest in and trade with each other, and to spur development across the Caribbean. Under the agreement both

regions have obligations and rights but the two regions' different stages of development are considered: the Caribbean enjoys preferential access to the EU, i.e. 100% duty and quota free access for all goods and services whereas Caribbean States have up to 25 years to cut import tariffs and 17% of goods and services considered sensitive were excluded and the Caribbean States have the right to respond should EU imports suddenly threaten local production. Finally, the EPA supports the region's integration process considered to be the basis for the EPA. Thus Cariforum States offer each other the same preferences they give the EU. Recently, the EU increased substantially its Caribbean regional programme which for the period 2014-2020 amounts to 346 million Euros to support three focal areas, which are

- (i) regional economic cooperation and integration,
- (ii) climate change, environment, disaster management and sustainable energy and
- (iii) crime and security.

And the EU has a bilateral program with Trinidad and Tobago which focusses on support to innovation and competitiveness, scheduled to be finalized this year together with the Government and against the background of the Governments' innovation policy.

Of the many reasons that underline the value of the project we are launching today in support to Trinidad and Tobago's export readiness, allow me to mention only a few selected ones:

- The fall in oil- and gas prices during the recent year and thus falling budget revenues for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago imply increased attention to how the country's economy will adapt and how the production of goods and services outside the energy sector will evolve and what could be the Government's best strategy and measures in supporting the development of the non-oil and –gas economy and to generate the required foreign exchange.
- Following the USA and Latin America and the Caribbean, the EU is Trinidad and Tobago's third most important trade partner with regard to both exports and imports.
- Since many years, Trinidad and Tobago is a leading country in the Caribbean not only because of its successful energy sector and highly developed energy related goods and services, but also regarding its well-respected manufacturing sector, which during 2015 appears to have recorded some real growth despite the decline in energy related production. This has been driven primarily by two sub-sectors, the Food, Beverage and Tobacco sub-sector which is the largest manufacturing sub-sector; and the Printing and Publishing sub-sector.
- However, in spite of the facts of open EU markets and a relatively strong manufacturing sector, it is reported that many Trinidadian manufacturers are not using the opportunity to export to the EU because of different reasons, which include

that they do not have the necessary certificates regarding fulfilment of standards mandatory in the EU since this would require sometimes considerable efforts and investment.

- Trinidad and Tobago appears to have a relatively healthy financial sector and sizable domestic savings which would allow to provide nearly any financing the non-oil and gas economy may require.

Given Trinidad and Tobago's high income status with its per capita income of nearly 20000 USD the country does not qualify for grant assistance from most of the development agencies. Hence, you can see that Trinidad and Tobago has a special place in the foreign relations with the EU given the new bilateral EU program of nearly 10 million euros in grant financing for the period 2015-2020 to support innovation, competitiveness, and the civil society.

Ladies and gentlemen, for all these reasons the project launched today will be extremely valuable and hence most likely we all would be very interested in receiving information from the project implementers whether thanks to their work a Trinidadian manufacturer who does not export to the EU today took the required efforts and investment and will be doing so perhaps even before this project ends. The EUs interest is long term, knowing that trade and specialization will contribute to higher living standards in both regions.

We are wishing the project implementers every possible success and thank them for all their coming efforts and you for your kind attention!