



MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

**GREETINGS BY SENATOR THE HONOURABLE
JENNIFER BAPTISTE-PRIMUS
MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

**AT THE
NATIONAL TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING CONVENTION 2018**

HYAT REGENCY TRINIDAD

JUNE 12, 2018

9:00 A.M.

- Dr. The Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago;
- The Honourable Anthony Garcia, Minister of Education;
- Dr. Ruby Alleyne, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Training Agency (NTA);
- Members of the Board of Directors of the NTA;
- Mr. Henderson Eastmond, Chairman, Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA);
- Ms. Alejandra Aillarzu, IDB Consultant;
- Dr. Borhene Chakroun, Chief of Section of Youth Literacy and Skills Development, UNESCO;
- Other representatives of regional and international organizations;
- Staff of the NTA;
- Specially invited guests;
- Members of the Media;
- Ladies and gentlemen.

A pleasant good morning to all. I am delighted to bring greetings on this occasion of the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Convention 2018. I wish to applaud the organizers of this Convention not only for their foresight in recognizing the need for a Convention on a most important topic but also in their selection of the date for convening this meeting.

Most of you would know that the month of June is very significant for us in Trinidad and Tobago, especially for those of us who would have served or are currently serving in the Labour Movement. On June 19, we celebrate Labour Day where we remember the struggles and toils of the pioneers of the Labour Movement for decent working conditions in Trinidad and Tobago.

Even today, June 12, we join the international community in commemorating World Day Against Child Labour where the theme for this year is “Generation safe and healthy”. The International Labour Organization estimates that 152 million children aged five to seventeen around the world are in child labour with 73 million performing work that is considered hazardous.

We all have a part to play in ensuring that our children are protected from the harmful effects of child labour which in most instances are attributed to situations of poverty. It is said that the **best route out of poverty is through decent work and the best route to decent work is through quality education that meets the needs of the labour market.** I hope that we are seeing the connections between

this Convention today and the efforts that we are making to promote decent work in Trinidad and Tobago.

I have just returned from participating in the 107th Session of the International Labour Conference of the ILO in Geneva where I had the distinct privilege of leading a delegation that took part in important discussions on issues facing the world of work and the future of work such as violence and harassment at work, development co-operation and social dialogue. I can tell you that while the topic of technical and vocational education and training was not specifically addressed at this Conference, the issues of skills development and lifelong learning were relevant to many of the discussions.

The theme of today's Convention, "The Role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Facilitating Skills Development for Employment and Entrepreneurship," is of utmost interest to me as I am bestowed with the honour of leading a Ministry that is committed to employment creation and decent work as well as entrepreneurial development.

Indeed, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in its efforts at stimulating diversification, reducing unemployment and building entrepreneurship, recognizes the need to take into account the critical changes occurring in the education sector and the increased demand for technical and vocational education and training which is crucial to the social, cultural and economic development of Trinidad and Tobago.

I am happy to see that there is a session on the Convention's programme that addresses the future of work. This is a major topic in the international arena articulated by the ILO as one of its centenary initiatives as it commemorates its 100th anniversary in 2019. In examining the future of work, the Director-General of the ILO at the 2015 session of the International Labour Conference, underscored the need to invest in cutting-edge skills required in the new knowledge economy and for a better connection to be established between educational systems and business needs. The role of TVET cannot be understated in this undertaking.

The NTA has a critical role to play in the mapping of new skills within Trinidad and Tobago. When issuing Work

Permits for non-nationals to enter into our country, I have noted the new job classifications that have arisen. The NTA's role will become crucial in the development of those persons who fit these skills. Just imagine that there are insufficient licensed embalmers in this country and we have to grant permits for outsiders to fulfill this role.

In light of the new and emerging trends in the world of work, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has articulated a number of goals in the National Development Strategy (Vision 2030), which speaks to reduced unemployment, decent work and the promotion of competitive businesses through fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. The Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development has been championing these goals through programmes such

as the On-the-Job Training Programme (OJTP) and the Adversity to Opportunity (A₂O) Programme.

The OJTP provides an opportunity for persons with technical and vocational education and training as well as those with other qualifications to obtain work experience based on their areas of study. Within recent times, we have received support from the IDB to assist the staff of the OJTP in enhancing skills development and anticipating skills demand. We are indeed grateful to the IDB for its assistance in strengthening the OJTP.

With respect to the Adversity to Opportunity Programme, which is the vehicle we are using to deliver on the Ten Point Plan on Unemployment which was adopted by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in 2016, we are

seeking to provide holistic support for unemployed and retrenched persons. One element of this plan involves working closely with the Ministry of Education to up-skill suitable persons from industry who may have been retrenched to the standard of technical and vocational education teachers to fill the shortage of teaching staff in this area.

As I close, permit me to share a few of the key Conclusions arising from a tripartite **Global Dialogue Forum on Vocational Education and Training** held by the ILO in 2010. These are:

- the need to encourage private and public investment in TVET;

- the need for countries to have more up-to-date and where possible ‘real time’ information on current and future skills trends for TVET to be more relevant;
- the importance of social dialogue on TVET policy formulation and implementation at the sectoral and national levels and within TVET systems and institutions; and
- the critical need to ‘build bridges’ between countries with effective TVET teacher training systems and those seeking to invest in new TVET teacher training structures through international co-operation.

As we embark on meaningful and fruitful deliberations today, I wish to remind us of the words of Peter Drucker who said, and I quote, “Since we live in an age of innovation, a

practical education must prepare a man for work that does not yet exist and cannot yet be clearly defined.” Indeed, we have a great task ahead of us.

In closing, I take this opportunity to extend good wishes for a most productive Convention and I look forward to learning about the outcomes of today’s deliberations. I also wish to extend Eid greetings to our Muslim brothers and sisters and Labour Day Greetings to my comrades and workers in the Labour Movement. Thank you for the opportunity to address you this morning and May God continue to bless our country of Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you.