



---

## Remarks by The Honourable Pennelope Beckles Minister of Planning and Development

### On the launch of the project: Modernising Trinidad and Tobago's Statistical Ecosystem through Enhanced SDG Data Development

---

26th July 2022

- Your Excellency Raphaël Varga van Kibéd, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Trinidad and Tobago;
- All other representatives of the Diplomatic Corps in attendance;
- Mrs. Joanne Deoraj, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Planning and Development and other Permanent Secretaries present;
- Mr. Dennis Zulu, United Nations Resident Coordinator; and other representatives and staff of the United Nations System;
- All other invited guests;
- Representatives of the Non-Government, Community Based and Civil Society Organisations present;
- Representatives of the media.

Good evening and welcome to this red letter day in the history, or, please allow me to correct myself and say the future of Trinidad and Tobago. Words betray the level of elation and pride I feel at being given this opportunity to share my thoughts with you all regarding this milestone in the modernisation of Trinidad and Tobago's Statistical Ecosystem through Enhanced SDG Data Development.

Before I say anything further, a number of organisations need commendation for not only getting us to this point, but ensuring that by the end of this project, we would have delivered what we are committing to do this evening.

This 24 month project will be implemented by a team of United Nations agencies inclusive of the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).



Coordinating support will be provided from the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Port-of-Spain along with a coalition of development partners including national authorities such as the Ministry of Planning and Development, the Central Statistical Office and the Tobago House of Assembly. Non-governmental organisations, private sector companies, international financial institutions and academia also deserve recognition for your invaluable roles. Time will not permit me to name everyone individually, but without you, roll out and implementation of this precious game-changing project would be impossible.

Congratulations at this stage are due to all involved, you have my full support, and the full support of the government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in your undertaking of this endeavour.

The maxim 'what gets measured, gets done', is definitely no cliché when we speak of national development. In 2020, I presented Trinidad and Tobago's first Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report to the United Nations regarding our progress in attaining the global Sustainable Development Goals. While we were able to present statistics to show our progress in areas such as infant mortality, gender balance in the workplace, poverty reduction, quality education and more, we had to admit that to make further progress in these and any other areas, there was more we needed to do to improve the reliability, accessibility and timeliness of disaggregated data and make this the cornerstone of our thrust to sustainable development.

Trinidad and Tobago's National Development Strategy, Vision 2030 iterates the need for a comprehensive, coordinated National Statistical System delivering quality, user-oriented and timely statistics on Trinidad and Tobago's economy, social needs and natural environment. This US seven hundred and twenty-one thousand plus dollar allocation for this project by the Joint SDG Fund of the United Nations cannot and will not go to waste. I reiterate to you all this evening my commitment to seeing the strengthening of Trinidad and Tobago's National Statistical System by improving the collection and use of data on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals all the way through.

We all can agree that effective decision and policy making rely on a robust National Statistical System, therefore, in the same way do our lives and the lives of our citizens also depend on the capacity of statistics to inform world class service delivery, leaving no one behind. Through this project, we will enhance the availability of disaggregated data for more SDG indicators, with the aim of added SDG-related policy making, programming and resourcing; as well as the identification, monitoring and rendering of more targeted assistance to those at risk, including women and girls, who have been identified as insufficiently considered in the collection of national statistics.

As we speak, the Central Statistical Office today completed field testing and training for Officers, who from August 1 until the end of November will be collecting data from households as part of Trinidad and Tobago's Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).

This will be one of the most wide-ranging sources of data on the status of our citizens, again with women and children at the forefront. We thank UNICEF for their continuous support in this regard. This is also a testament to the grit and determination of the team at the Central Statistical Office, that even in the face of occasional public



trepidation, does not give up on the mandate before them. I laud Mr. Andre Blanchard, the acting Director of Statistics and the CSO Team. With the dedication you all demonstrate, I have the utmost confidence in our ability to make the next step with this project.

What is also inspiring, is that modernising our statistical ecosystem, through the development of technological and professional capacities will help to further accelerate the adoption of international statistical standards, of which I am also proud to say, the Central Statistical Office has been undeterred in their pursuit. Also, from an economic perspective, Trinidad and Tobago will benefit from the formulation of investment plans focused on national institutions and the broader statistical ecosystem.

This means that the private sector also is a primary stakeholder in this process. In order to build globally competitive businesses, leverage cutting edge technology to develop products, expand your capacity, make investment decisions, data is key. Therefore your support and participation in this project will be to your advantage.

Some more benefits to Trinidad and Tobago to be gained from the successful implementation of this modernisation drive include:

- Strengthening networks and partnerships across public and private sectors to foster better collaboration on data collection and sharing, this reinforces SDG 17, partnerships for the goals;
- Revitalising national legislation on statistics to promote best practices;
- Consolidating Trinidad and Tobago's position as a regional centre of excellence for big data;
- Raising the profile of statistics in Trinidad and Tobago, promoting the value of statistics to national development.

Another element of this evening's exercise is a donation of IT equipment to the Central Statistical Office through the joint project. This is vital to the work of the Continuous Sample Survey of the Population (CSSP) section of the CSO which is charged with the responsibility of collecting, analysing and disseminating national labour statistics. To further enhance the labour statistics produced, the CSSP section is currently in the process of redesigning the sample frame, questionnaire and methodology for its labour force survey.

Success in this undertaking is contingent not only on the revision of the sample frame and questionnaire, but also on modernised and digitalised hardware equipment, specifically aimed at performing enhanced field operations by transitioning from a paper based system to a Computer Aided Personal Interviewing system called CAPI.

Our undying gratitude is extended to the International Labour Organisation for making available 75 Samsung Tablets inclusive of protective cases and 10 Lenovo Thinkpad Laptops with bags, all amounting to two hundred and eighty-four thousand, two hundred and forty Trinidad and Tobago dollars



Having shared my thoughts with you, I re-emphasise that the process of Modernising Trinidad and Tobago's Statistical Ecosystem through Enhanced SDG Data Development is not just for this period in time or for our current generations, but for future generations. Especially as we march towards the year 2030 with the rest of the world.

Once we get it right, we will leave a legacy that heralds future prosperity, as well as provides a foundation that can be built upon for the next millennium of national, regional and global goals.

Again, what gets measured, gets done and through this project we will meet the objectives of our national development thrust, Vision 2030, which we have integrated with the global Sustainable Development Goals. I again thank you all for your time, and wish everyone a safe and enjoyable evening.