



EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

*EPA Standby Facility for Capacity Building Programme: Developing the
Export Readiness of Trinidad and Tobago's Enterprises for the European Union Market:
"Fit 4 Europe Project"
23 November 2016*

- Senator, the Honourable, Paula Gopee-Scoon, Minister of Trade and Industry
- Mr. Ashmeer Mohamed, Chairman, exporTT Ltd
- 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
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning.

I have the pleasure of bringing remarks on behalf of Mr. Arend Biesebroek, Ambassador of the European Union Delegation to Trinidad and Tobago, who is passing his very best greetings to you and is currently in Brussels.

Today, we will hear the experience report on export opportunities for TT exporters in some selected EU countries which have been visited. This project is thus trying to contribute directly to increase trade between the Caribbean region and the

European Union which is the main idea of the European Partnership Agreement signed in December 2008.

The EPA is a trade and development agreement that essentially gives the Cariforum countries duty free, quota free access to the EU market while only gradually and partially opening up the Cariforum market for EU goods. But it goes further than just tariffs. The agreement contains provisions on custom and trade facilitation and it calls on its parties to promote regional integration and to work on the development of harmonized regional legislation, procedures and requirements.

Even if slow, regional integration is progressing and even in the current difficult economic context. But intraregional trade in goods only represents about 10% of the total trade in goods of the region, and also the trade with the EU is far below the regions potential.

Different elements explain this: lack of capacity, lack of harmonization on areas like customs legislation, logistics costs, and Technical Barriers to Trade and Sanitary and Phyto- Sanitary measures.

As an important and longstanding partner of the region the EU has a keen interest in improving this situation. The EU countries themselves have gone through different steps of harmonization and integration and they would like to contribute to a similar process in the Caribbean.

Hence, the EU supports all mentioned areas and please allow to give one example: in the area of addressing Technical Barriers to Trade, improve legislation for Sanitary and Phyto- Sanitary measures, Private sector development and social dialogue on the free trade agreement the current regional EU support programme provides more than 140 million euros.

And trade facilitation sometimes more than reduction of tariffs has a great potential as a growth engine, reducing cost and time of trading.

Hence, we are eager to learn about the findings of the experts who travelled to Europe to study selected markets there and hope that their reported lessons may contribute to better exploitation of the opportunities offered by the EPA and may provide insights what we can do better.

We would like to thank you again for inviting the EU to speak today and hope for good discussions.

Thank you