KEYNOTE ADDRESS

THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF EDUCATION, MR. ANTHONY GARCIA, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

AT THE LAUNCH OF THE FINDINGS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S SOFTWARE AND WEB DEVELOPMENT SECTORAL INNOVATION MAPPING (SIM) STUDY

(9:40 A.M. – 9:45 A.M.)
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HILTON TRINIDAD AND CONFERENCE CENTRE (BELMONT SALON)

Good morning!

It is indeed a pleasure to be here for this occasion – **the Launch of the Findings of Trinidad and Tobago's Software and Web Development Sectoral Innovation Mapping (SIM) Study**. I wish to warmly congratulate the National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology **(NIHERST)** for paving the way in conducting this micro-level study, which, given our present economic setting is relevant and innovative.

Admittedly, I am not familiar with this research tool, the SIM, but I understand the task at hand is to map the innovation systems of specific sectors. I know that thus far, NIHERST has utilized this tool to understand the innovation systems in three priority sectors namely the Software and Web Development, Animation and the Energy Services sectors.

In my opinion, NIHERST is best placed to conduct this type of research. Its line Ministry is the Ministry of Education. According to the Trinidad and Tobago Gazette No. 97 dated September 23, 2015, the Ministry of Education is responsible for the areas of Research and Development and

Innovation Systems. I therefore wish to congratulate NIHERST on being the forerunner in championing research of this nature.

Despite the economic challenges encountered, I know it is my government's intention to transition Trinidad and Tobago to a knowledge-based economy. This expression coined by advanced countries describes certain trends seen first in advanced and emerging economies where there is a greater dependency on knowledge, information and high skill levels to generate economic growth. In these countries, there are many high-tech manufacturing businesses that increasingly incorporate the use of high knowledge intensive technologies in their production processes and services provisions. Advanced systems of ICT have been the enabler for these processes.

In our local setting, we have far to go in implementing the operating systems seen in advanced economies. Nonetheless, there have been efforts that demonstrate government's commitment to growing the ICT industry. My colleagues from the Ministry of Public Administration and Communication would be able to speak more on the recently re-constituted e-Business Roundtable, whose members are co-opted from a wide range of pertinent public and private institutions. Their raison

d'etre is to help build the enabling infrastructure to support ICT focusing on legislation, human capital and e-payments.

From my frame of reference, I especially have a keen interest in learning how to support the growth of ICTs in knowing whether the skills acquired by our graduates are those needed by the industry. And if this is not the case, then efforts must be made to remedy the situation. If Trinidad and Tobago is to nurture its knowledge intensive industries, the onus is on the education system to ensure that the skills that are in demand locally and globally can be supplied by some of our graduates. And if our graduates are to operate in firms that support global demand, then the quality of our graduates must meet international standards.

I anticipate that the findings of the SIM will also shed light on the research needs of the Software and Web Development sector. I am sure dialogue is taking place through formal or informal channels. Personally, I would like to see more formalized in the system, structures that would enable our tertiary education institutions and private sector organizations to increase collaborative efforts particularly in the area of curriculum development.

I speak on behalf of the Ministry when I re-emphasize that we are sincerely eager to help the industry perform at its best mark. Let us know how we can support YOU in your efforts to drive this economy forward. I am confident that the information about to be shared will inform and support my work in the Ministry of Education as well as my colleagues in the Ministry of Public Administration and Communication and also in the Ministry of Trade and Industry. With evidence at hand, we the policy makers will be better equipped to make informed decisions and develop relevant policy interventions.

Ladies and gentlemen before closing, let me once again thank the staff of NIHERST for its efforts and vision to be the forerunner in the conduct of these SIM research studies. I eagerly await the delivery of the presentation and I remain committed to doing my part in building the ready-to-work labour force for the Software and Web Development Industries.

I Thank You