



**Remarks**  
To be delivered by  
**Ms Catherine Kumar**  
**C.E.O**  
Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry  
and Commerce

**PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE OCCASION  
OF THE CHAMBER'S "TRINIDAD AND  
TOBAGO IN EUROPE 2012" TRADE  
MISSION HELD ON TUESDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH,  
2012 AT THE LEON AGOSTINI  
CONFERENCE HALL, CHAMBER BUILDING,  
WESTMOORINGS**

- His Excellency H.E. Joaquin de Aristegui,  
Ambassador to the Kingdom of Spain

- Mr. Peter Matthieu, Deputy Ambassador ,  
Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
  
- Mr. Ulrich Kinne, Deputy Head of Mission ,  
Embassy of the Federal Republic of  
Germany
  
- Ms Kathrin Renner, Programme Officer,  
Delegation of the European Union to  
Trinidad and Tobago
  
- Other representatives of the diplomatic  
corps

- Mr Carl Francis, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Trade and Industry
- Mrs. Margaret Parillion, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Communications
- Mr. Brian Frontin, Chairman of ETeck
- Members of the mission delegation
- Members of the media

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning.

Thank you all for taking the time out of your busy schedules to be part of our “Trinidad and Tobago in Europe 2012” Press Conference where we will share with you some highlights and lessons learnt from this trade mission. A special thank you to the members of the media who have joined us this morning.

The Chamber received funding from Trade.Com Facility based in Brussels under the European Development Fund to embark upon this mission, which is a follow up to an earlier study undertaken, and again funded by Trade.Com, to ascertain the reasons hindering the private sector from trading under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). The study revealed that there was a deficiency in

awareness of the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement and its provisions as well as little knowledge of the EU markets. In this regard, it was recommended that the Chamber undertake more sector specific trade missions to Europe with the aim of seeking strategic partnerships for the business community and obtaining market intelligence.

To this end, over the period 26<sup>th</sup> February to 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2012 the Chamber led a delegation of nine companies to five (5) cities in three (3) countries. In Germany we visited Hamburg and Munich; in the Netherlands we explored opportunities in Rotterdam and in the United Kingdom we had the pleasure of getting to know Birmingham and Manchester. In each city

we were hosted by their Chamber of Commerce and in total, one hundred and thirty seven (137) business to business meetings were held. Also included in the agenda were site visits to ICT clusters, innovation parks, food factories and research institutes.

The delegation comprised of five ICT companies, two food and beverage companies and two construction companies. Some of our larger mission companies were interested in investment opportunities, specifically in the field of renewable energy and were able to have productive meetings in those areas.

From our initial feedback there are approximately forty one (41) business leads

that our companies will be immediately following up with, and the Chamber will take an active role in also following up with these companies so that we can measure the tangible benefits of this Mission.

The Chamber has always been an advocate for diversification and being on the ground in Europe has allowed us the opportunity to market Trinidad and Tobago in sectors that have been targeted by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for economic diversification. Moreover, throughout the mission we were able to market Trinidad and Tobago as a gateway to the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America. No doubt, we are quite a small economy compared to the

markets that we have visited and while we hold incredible natural advantages we must continue to seek ways to enhance our competitiveness and productivity in order to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the EPA.

As a Chamber, our objectives included increasing the technical capacity of our staff to provide practical assistance to our members and to forge relationships with the European Business Service Organisations. At each of the five Chambers we met with either their Chief Executive Officer or their Head of International Trade. We have learnt lessons from their operational practices, membership services and there have been offers by the Chambers to assist us where needed. It is our belief that

without the face to face and on the ground interaction these new relationships would not have been forged. Further, the Chamber has gained increased experience in trade promotion activity and looks forward to implementing the best practices learnt in future projects of this nature.

The Chamber was also able to deepen our already existing relationship with the Caribbean Export Development Agency (CEDA) who participated in the mission as an observer. This relationship is a very important one for us and for our members as the Agency plays a critical role in EPA implementation within the region.

Additionally, the Ministry of Trade and Industry was represented on the Mission, and from the feedback received, theirs was a rewarding experience, and the representatives who were there will take the learnings back to the Ministry.

While in Europe, I read an article on the subject “The region is scoring low on EPA implementation”. The CARIFORUM –EU EPA though signed in 2008, has not yet been ratified in Trinidad and Tobago and we urge the Ministry of Trade and Industry to push the laying of the Bill on the Parliamentary agenda. We are however quite pleased that the Trade Implementation Unit (TIU) has been established at the Ministry and the Chamber’s Trade Unit

and the TIU have been in frequent dialogue with each other.

I wish to acknowledge the support given by His Excellency Garvin Nicholas as evidenced by his participation in Hamburg, Munich and Birmingham; Mr. Howard Kroch – the Honorary Consul for Trinidad and Tobago to Hamburg, Germany for his warm reception to us in Hamburg; and Her Excellency Margaret King-Rousseau for her interest during the pre mission stages and also for her warm welcome and participation in Rotterdam.

Finally, before I close I must thank the project team for the organisation of this successful mission. This project was managed by Mr.

Richard Hess and the core project team comprised of Clive Vokes, Paula Norris and our very own Larry Placide. Their commitment and dedication to this project has been unrelenting. The companies that participated have illustrated flexibility and a certain open mindedness that have significantly contributed to the success of this mission.

Ladies and gentlemen, we view this trade mission as just the beginning of a new way we do business with Europe!

*I would now like to introduce you to Mr. Clive Vokes. Clive is the Managing Director of MarketScoping International and was the Team Leader for this project.*

