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Opening Remarks

To be delivered by

Mr. Andrew Sabga

President,

**Trinidad and Tobago Chamber
of Industry and Commerce**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
15th JUMPSTART GRADUATION CEREMONY
TUESDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER 2012
10:00AM – 12:00NOON
LEON AGOSTINI CONFERENCE HALL, CHAMBER BUILDING**

Salutations

- **Her Excellency Dr. Jean Ramjohn-Richards, First Lady of the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago**
- **Ms. Catherine Kumar – Chief Executive Officer, Trinidad & Tobago Chamber of Industry & Commerce**
- **Mr. Nigel Lawrence - Feature Speaker**
- **Representatives of Participating Companies**
- **Representatives of Participating Schools**
- **Facilitators**

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- **Members of the Nova Committee**
 - **Rima Mohammed - Chairman**
 - **Arnold Cato - Past Vice-Chair**
 - **Other members of the Committee**

- **Graduates**

- **Parents**

- **Members of the Media**

- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

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Good Morning and welcome,

It is with great pleasure that I address you this morning on the occasion of our 15th Jumpstart Graduation Ceremony.

A special welcome once again to Her Excellency, Dr. Jean Ramjohn-Richards, who has so graciously been the Patron of the Chamber's Jumpstart Programme since 2007. Your Excellency, on behalf of the Chamber I would like to thank you for your support of our initiative, which we believe to be so very important to developing our nation's youth. Thank

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you for taking the time to be here and delivering remarks at today's ceremony.

I wish to also warmly welcome our panel and our graduates. Each year, I see the Jumpstart programme continue to grow from strength to strength and I offer heartiest congratulations to each and every one of our graduates this morning. I also congratulate the Chamber's NOVA Committee for your dedication year on year to the Jumpstart programme, making it a well recognized youth development initiative in Trinidad and Tobago.

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Youth training, employment and entrepreneurship have always been high on the Chamber's agenda. And so, 15 years ago, through our Nova Committee, the Chamber embarked on a project aimed at facilitating opportunities for the development and exposure of our youth. Our Nova Committee approached some schools with this idea, hoping to reach out to those students who would not usually have the opportunity for internship and professional training, and developing them holistically through educational orientation sessions and mentoring. The spin-off effect, we hoped, would be the development of young people leaving school and entering the

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workplace with a more positive self-image and greater self-confidence.

Fifteen years ago, in 1998, Jumpstart was born in very humble beginnings – with the initial pilot project involving only one school, 10 students, and 10 participating companies. The following year, the Committee doubled their efforts, with two schools, 20 students and 19 participating companies. I am pleased to announce that this year, the Jumpstart Programme has enrolled almost 100 students and I am advised that this year saw the largest number of participating companies – standing at 53. I believe

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the Committee deserves a round of applause for their hard work and dedication.

Each year the Committee adds a new dimension to this outstanding Programme, having expanded it to all areas of Trinidad as well as Tobago, and the initiative has even seen some of its participants receive permanent placements in their respective places of employment. We are proud to say that the Programme also gives its participants an all-round training in areas such as financial management, life enhancement skills, and discipline.

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We believe that it is important that we assist our youth with their individual and social development which will help with youth employment, alleviating the vicious cycle of poverty and social exclusion.

To the graduates before me today, I hope that you recognize the great opportunity that you have been given to be a part of this programme. Particularly for those of you who were placed within companies, this was an opportunity that many of your counterparts may not be fortunate to receive. The lessons you have learned, friendships made, and the linkages you have made during your internships are all priceless and I hope that what you have learned will

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stay with you as you pursue your dreams and move into adulthood.

Let me however warn you that each stage of your life will bring its challenges. You have climbed one hurdle today and, as you go back to pursue your studies or enter the workforce, there will be more to overcome. During your internships you would have learned considerably about the commitment and dedication it takes to make meaningful contributions in the corporate world. I council you to always strive for the best and to always put your best foot forward and be the most productive citizen you can in both your professional and personal lives.

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As you leave the Programme, please do not see this as the end, but, rather, the beginning of a new chapter in your lives. The feedback from your Mentors during the programme is invaluable. I encourage you to take the positive and build on it; and use the critiques in a way that will help you to develop on those areas that need improvement. Even as an experienced business owner, I can tell you that each of us always has room for improvement. Entrepreneurs and business leaders are always growing, always learning from every experience. And so, if nothing else, I will leave with you this message today: Never stop growing; never

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stop learning. Never think that you have reached the point that you know everything – that will only stunt your growth and keep you from truly reaching your highest potential.

This has been a golden opportunity for you to prepare yourselves for the next step or for the transition into your adult life. I hope you will continue to reach for the stars and always believe in yourselves. The Chamber certainly believes in you.

Thank you and I wish you all the best.