

**Address by Her Excellency Dr. Jean Ramjohn-Richards,
First Lady of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Jumpstart 2012
Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Commerce
JumpStart Programme Graduation Ceremony of 2012,
Leon Agostini Conference Hall, on 4th September, 2012,
10.00 a.m. – 12:00noon**

Thank you, Master of Ceremonies, Mr. Bernard Campbell

Mr. Andrew Sabga, President of the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce

Ms Catherine Kumar, Chief Executive Officer of the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce

Ms Rima Mohammed, Chairman of the NOVA Committee and other Committee Members

Mr. Nigel Lawrence

Facilitators

Distinguished Graduates

Principals of participating schools

Members of the Media

Other Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

Young people everywhere need to be inspired, particularly at this time, when, all over the world, there is evidence that societies are in decline. I say “inspired”, rather than “influenced”, because I have in mind their being moved to take responsible action, as a result of the ideas that are formed, within their beings, as they observe the behaviour of honourable people.

There is a shade of difference when one thinks of influence, though that works for good as for bad. I have the sense that influence connotes a more passive state, in that one acts without necessarily being mindful of why.

I say this in the context of what is happening in this excellent programme, initiated not very long ago, by the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce. Here, young people are engaged in a process of nurturing whereby they are made to observe how things are done, outside of the generally protective enclave of the school

environment. I am certain that their experiences are varied and that the passage is not always smooth, but even so, the exposure that they are afforded surely helps them to develop life skills and helps them also to equip themselves for the world of work, on a full time basis.

I commend the Chamber, as I have done in the past, for bringing together school, parent or guardian and business community, with a view to developing responsible young people, who will eventually take up the mantle of leadership in different areas, including becoming captains of industry.

Space must be made for our youth to develop an interest in entrepreneurship and those people who have the vision to embrace them as part of their trainee cohort are making a major input in that direction. That is necessary if we are to avoid the anomaly of highly qualified persons being on the breadline, for lack of experience or any other cause. Self-employment is the thrust that must be made, in greater measure, particularly in a job market that is highly competitive.

One of the most critical by-products, so to speak, of this programme, is the factor of taking responsibility. Sometimes young people desire to be treated as adults, but take no responsibility for their actions,

putting forward, as an excuse, their youth. We see it so often, also, when a young person shines in a particular field, we, adults, allow them to be spoilt by our indulgences and excuses made for them, so that the promise of an outstanding future is killed because of our lack of wisdom. Their fame is short-lived because we have contributed to derailing them. Not that they do not deserve the well earned applause, but we must allow them room for growth and not ever give them the idea that they have done it all.

In the business environment, there is hardly a chance of that happening. They must take responsibility as the reputation and the profitability of the companies are affected by what they do, to a greater or lesser degree. They must use well the opportunity given to them to be a part of strong economic activity, without which a country cannot survive.

So I say to the graduating class and to those who will follow, do not waste what others would long to have but cannot, because there is no room for them. The Chamber of Commerce has made intervention on your behalf, the business community (and I hope in increasing numbers) has opened their doors to you and, as far as I can tell, you have the support of your schools, parents and guardians to encourage you.

You are citizens of a country that can go very far in terms, of its own development and in making positive contributions to world development. But it is our people's attitude and willingness to work and serve well that will get us to that place. Do your very best always and, having done so, you will have done your duty.

It has been my pleasure to be Patron of this organization. I will continue to follow your progress and I have no doubt that you will maintain the high standard that has been set for you by your Sponsors, the men and women of the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce. I take this opportunity to thank the forward-looking business men and women of our country who are wisely fulfilling a need. I wish you growing success in your businesses.

I congratulate the graduating class of 2012. Be an inspiration wherever you are, now and in the future.

May God bless our Nation!