



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

REMARKS BY MR CARL FRANCIS

PERMANENT SECRETARY

**MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SMALL AND MICRO ENTERPRISE
DEVELOPMENT**

**OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 41ST TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING OF
ILO/CINTERFOR**

**“SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION IN VOCATIONAL
TRAINING: NOWADAYS AND BEYOND 2015”**

HYATT REGENCY, TRINIDAD

9:00 A.M.

MONDAY JULY 8, 2013

Senator The Honourable Fazal Karim, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training;
Your Excellencies and other representatives of the Diplomatic Corps

Representatives of International Organizations

Ms. Gerardina González, ILO Deputy Regional Director for the Americas;

Dr. Giovanni di Cola, Director, ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean;

Ms. Martha Pacheco, Director of ILO Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (CINTERFOR);

Ms. Myrna Bernard, Director of Human and Social Development of the CARICOM Secretariat;

Mr. Kelvin Mahabir, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Training Agency, Trinidad and Tobago;

Ms Angela Sinaswee Gervais, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training;

Other Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Permanent Secretaries;

Ms Elphege Joseph, CEO, National Training Agency

Other distinguished representatives of Government, Business and Labour;

Esteemed presenters, panelists and participants;

Representatives of the media

Specially invited guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good morning to you all.

It is indeed an honour and a pleasure to deliver remarks at this the Opening Ceremony of the 41st Technical Committee Meeting of the ILO/CINTERFOR. Given the lead responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development for ILO and labour matters, we regard the discussions to be held over the next three days as important complements to the areas of work under our portfolio.

I am therefore pleased to add my voice to the words of welcome to all participants, especially those from our sister Latin American and Caribbean countries and from beyond the region. It is a pleasure to have you on our shores as you address an extremely important subject for us in the region and throughout the ILO - 'South-South and Triangular Co-operation in the present period and beyond 2015'.

Before proceeding I must convey the apologies of the Honourable Errol McLeod, who had so looked forward to making these remarks but is called away this morning to other duties of state. He has asked me to convey his best wishes for a successful meeting.

Permit me to congratulate the ILO/CINTERFOR on its Fiftieth (50th) anniversary. This meeting is being held in Trinidad and Tobago when our country is commemorating fifty years of independence as well as fifty years of membership of the ILO. Our Caribbean Community itself also celebrates forty (40) years of existence. These are milestone achievements of which we must be proud and which afford an opportunity to reflect on what we have accomplished as a country or as an institution strategise on the way forward and strengthen our resolve to improve the standard of living and welfare of our citizens in the future.

This meeting is being held, on the heels of the Eighth ILO Meeting of Caribbean Ministers of Labour, which Trinidad and Tobago also had the honour to host last week and at which a range of issues pertinent to the topic of decent work for development, including technical education and training, was discussed extensively. Policies and projections were formulated and this forum will provide the platform on which many of them, particularly in respect of education and training, could be implemented. This meeting therefore provides an opportunity for us all to collaborate and to adopt a policy-coherent approach in respect of the aforementioned issues.

At last week's meeting of ILO Caribbean Ministers of Labour, we were also honoured to receive His Excellency Guy Ryder, Director-General of the ILO, on his maiden visit to the Caribbean since his assumption of office on October 1, 2012. The Director-General informed of the on-going reform at the ILO and the areas of focus as the organisation approaches its centenary. These reforms are aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the ILO, bringing the organisation closer to its constituents and making it more relevant to its stakeholders. We all realize, I am sure, that a people centric approach to all that we

do must be the sine qua non of our existence. We must treat development as a goal for the improvement of man not just the improvement of the public or private purse.

Today, we recognize the significant work that ILO/CINTERFOR continues to do in its role as a 'key coordinator of a network of national vocational training and career education institutions' and in disseminating knowledge, experiences and good practices on human resource training and development with a view to promoting decent and productive work. At a time when the global economic landscape is being reformed and new avenues for recovery from the crisis are being explored, ILO/CINTERFOR stands out as a shining example of south-south and triangular co-operation in technical and vocational education and training.

While contributing to the promotion of decent work through the development of capacities in technical and vocational education and training, ILO/CINTERFOR also plays an important role in the current thrust to restore confidence in the global economy through job creation, economic growth, and social progress. I wish to point out that at the high-level panel discussion held in the framework of the recently concluded 102nd Session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva, many of the distinguished panelists spoke about skills development and enhancement as a critical strategy in recovery from the global crisis and, in particular, recovery from the global jobs crisis.

Ladies and gentlemen, the importance of Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) in enhancing economic growth and the socio-economic development of countries, with benefits for individuals, their families, communities and society in general, cannot be disputed. As one UNESCO Report indicates, improving education for the world of work can help raise the incomes of poverty-stricken families, provide citizens with more choices in their lives, help alleviate poverty and empower individuals who would otherwise be marginalized. Our presence here today is testament to our shared recognition of the importance of TVET and the need to place greater prominence in the national, regional and global dialogue on skills development, particularly for our young people.

In the wider discussion on workforce development and skills enhancement, as I mentioned earlier, at last week's Eighth ILO Meeting of Caribbean Ministers of Labour, significant emphasis was placed on the issue of productivity and the link with workforce development. The sixteen Ministers of Labour and twenty-one delegations from the Caribbean region, who considered issues on the theme "The Caribbean and Labour 2013 and Beyond – Strengthening Decent Work for Development," agreed unanimously, among other things, that a '**productivity revolution**' was required in our region. This was in keeping with the strong view espoused by Trinidad and Tobago's Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development at the 102nd Session of the International Labour Conference that '**there can be no development without labour and no labour without development**'. In realizing such a 'revolution', it was agreed by Ministers that the following are critical elements of the way forward:

- creating an enabling environment for workers to be productive;
- focusing attention on training and re-training of the workforce;
- enhancing technical and vocational education and training, including the national and regional qualifications framework;
- reforming the education curriculum to focus increasingly on entrepreneurship, mathematics and other elements of science and technology; and
- engaging the social partners through social dialogue on these issues.

The Ministers of Labour of the Caribbean region intend to follow through on their resolve to promote a regional approach to common labour and labour related issues, challenges and problems, including those related to workforce development and to collaborate to take advantage of opportunities where they arise. They made a clear call for the support of the ILO and the CARICOM Secretariat to assist in developing regional labour policies and strategies that would include:

- a Regional Human Resource Development Strategy;
- a Regional Employment Policy;
- a Regional Green Jobs and Green Enterprises Policy;
- a Regional Strategy for Enhancing Productivity; and
- a Regional Training Plan.

As work advances towards a United Nations sustainable development agenda post-2015, this meeting's focus on south-south and triangular co-operation and social dialogue in TVET beyond 2015 is indeed commendable. This Meeting does an excellent job in interlinking concepts and approaches that are aimed at realizing decent work. It follows upon the significant focus of the ILO on the areas of technical and vocational education and training, south-south and triangular co-operation and social dialogue. A Global Dialogue Forum on TVET, approved by the Governing Body of the ILO, was held in September 2012 and focused on employment and the working environment in the sector as well as the lifelong learning framework to which public and private vocational education and training contributed.

In March 2012, the Governing Body of the ILO endorsed the ILO Strategy on south-south and triangular co-operation following upon a discussion which recognized the importance of the ILO/CINTERFOR network and knowledge-sharing platforms. More recently, in June of this year, the 102nd Session of the International Labour Conference of the ILO adopted Conclusions aimed at strengthening social dialogue in all its forms. These two elements are inextricably bound.

Trinidad and Tobago, as the Caribbean representative on the Governing Body of the ILO for the 2011-2014 triennium, is happy to see that this meeting is bringing together these issues which are of extreme importance for the Latin American and Caribbean region. On the issue of social dialogue, Trinidad and Tobago will soon establish a Social Dialogue Task Force, which will be responsible for making

recommendations for institutionalising the national framework that would allow the effective involvement of Government, Employers, and Labour, with Civil Society input, in the consideration of national development matters. I am optimistic that we will be addressing issues pertinent to education and training, including the area of technical and vocational education and its application to development.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development of Trinidad and Tobago continues to play a significant role in building our systems for workforce development. This is being done through the strengthening of the labour market information system to produce relevant, timely and quality information that could inform employers, students, workers, education and training institutions and policy makers, on labour market requirements and changes such as current and future skills needs. The establishment of a Standing National Labour Market Council, which brings together representatives of Government, Business, Trade Unions and Academia, to assist in establishing the methodologies and harmonized approaches that would allow such critical labour market information to be produced, has been important in this regard.

We are also working on establishing a Labour Market Information System for Trinidad and Tobago (LAMISTT) with the assistance of the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean, which has done significant work in establishing a Caribbean Labour Market Information System in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). The model is being adjusted to meet local needs, given the peculiar characteristics of the Trinidad and Tobago economy.

As we move forward with our labour agenda, I am pleased to inform that the Ministry also continues to work closely with the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training on key initiatives such as career fairs and the establishment of the Centre for Workforce Research and Development which was launched in January of this year. We look forward to continued collaboration as we go forward. Our goal, and I refer to all of us, must be development that is innovative. Development that is nimble. Development that is sustainable. We must abandon the tendency to operate in silos or to compete at the expense of the national, regional or international good. We compete for market share but we could all benefit if we view the growth and re-positioning of TVET as beneficial to all. We must have new approaches to the issues in the constantly evolving marketplace. Approaches that place labour at the centre of any development paradigm. Labour must however be ready and trained for the task. The new trends in migration, the emerging new growth poles, the decline of old ones, all call for a new tomorrow that must be conditioned by what we do today.

In closing, I extend every good wish for successful deliberations and look forward to learning about the outcomes and to collaborating and contributing, where possible, to their implementation.

I thank you.