

MEDIA RELEASE

A Focus on the Ease of Doing Business and Growth

Port of Spain, Monday, September 26, 2022 - The Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association (TTMA) notes the contribution of the Minister of Finance, Colm Imbert's reading of the National Budget, "Tenacity and Stability in the face of Global Challenges", today in Parliament.

President of the TTMA Ms. Tricia Coosal stated that the Association commends the Government on the partnership and dialogue it continues to have with the private sector to ensure the economy continues to stabilise and grow following the impact of COVID-19 and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war as evidenced by the announcement of an expected revised real GDP growth of 2% and growth of the non-energy sector by the same 2%.

Coosal commented, "The importance of ensuring the Ease of Doing Business was once again stressed by the Minister via the pledge of digitization through the strengthening of the Single Electronic Window and implementation of the electronic fund transfer framework to allow businesses to make payments to the Government by the business community ... these are needed and welcomed initiatives."

Ms. Coosal also noted, "TTMA has advocated for a more efficient tax collecting mechanism, stressing the importance of widening the tax net as opposed to further burdening the already compliant population of the country. In this regard the TTMA looks forward to operationalisation of the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority in 2023 and anticipates that this facility would allow for greater efficiencies in the tax collection."

In an effort to assist business on industrial parks, Ms Coosal noted "The Association looks forward to Phase 3 of the modern state of the art industrial park - Phoenix Park. The announcement of Phase 3 and the eventual roll out of a trade and exhibition centre at the industrial estate is welcomed as many synergies exist with TTMA's annual Trade and Investment Convention."

Ms. Coosal acknowledged, "The Government's initiative to further the operationalization of the Manufacturing Apprenticeship programme and the Export Booster Initiative as well as increasing the allotment of the Foreign Exchange facility at EXIM Bank are pleasing deliverables. The Government continues to signal the trust it places in the manufacturing sector to continue within a framework of public-private partnership to lead the charge on diversification of the economy as evident by the 17% increase in exports. We look forward to the specifics of the EXIM facility, which has worked really well for the SME exporters among our membership."

TTMA supports the Government's commitment to the CARICOM Heads of Government goal to reduce the region's export bill by 25% by 2025 via the budgetary allocation of \$300 Million into agriculture incentive and infrastructure programmes to assist with food security and diversification in the agro processing sub-sector of manufacturing. Additionally, the rebate of \$25,000.00 for the implementation of renewable wind and solar energy in agriculture will support the further development of this sector.

TTMA applauds the Government's commitment to SMEs via the injection of \$500 Million – in partnership with commercial banks - for long term guarantee schemes for SMEs, guaranteeing 80% of loans for up to 10 years. This guarantee, coupled with the increase in the maximum funding of exportTT's Grand Fund Facility from \$250,000 to \$340,000, will work to strengthen SMEs' competitiveness and increase their contribution to the exports of the non-energy sector.

Ms. Coosal noted that the Government's announcement of VAT payments of \$4 Billion in 2022, however, she added, "The Association hopes the disbursement of VAT refund continues rapidly in the coming fiscal since the SME sector specifically suffers significantly from cash flow when payments are outstanding. As a result, TTMA looks forward to a continued roll out for its members, in a timely manner, for fiscal 2022-2023.

Minister Imbert is scheduled to participate in a post-budget event with TTMA membership tomorrow, Tuesday 27th September, to discuss how the new measures are going to help the sector. We look forward to this engagement where many questions will be asked and answers will be provided by the Minister of Finance and other leading experts.

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