



FEATURE ADDRESS

BY

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE FAZAL KARIM
MINISTER OF TERTIARY EDUCATION AND
SKILLS TRAINING

FOR THE

OPENING CEREMONY FOR ILO/CINTERFOR
41st TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING

MONDAY JULY 8, 2013
9.00a.m.
HYATT REGENCY

Salutations

- Mr. Carl Francis - The Permanent Secretary of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development;
- Mrs. Myrna Bernard – The Directorate of Human and Social Development of the CARICOM Secretariat;
- Mrs. Gerardina Gonzalez – The ILO Deputy Regional Director for the Americas;
- Dr. Giovanni Di Cola - The ILO Director of the Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean;
- Ms. Martha Pacheco – Director ILO/ CINTERFOR;
- Ambassadors of Countries;
- Government Ministers of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago;
- Ms. Angela Sinaswee-Gervais - Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training;
- Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Permanent Secretaries in the Ministries of the Government of the Republic Trinidad and Tobago;
- Mr. Kelvin Mahabir – Chairman of The National Training Agency;
- Mrs. Elphege Joseph – Chief Executive Officer – National Training Agency;
- Vocational Training Institutions of Spain, Latin America and the Caribbean;
- Participants of Spain, Latin America and the Caribbean;
- Chairmen, Members of the Board of Directors and CEOs – of Agencies of the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training;
- Members of Caribbean Association of National Training Agencies (CANTA);
- Business Organisations;
- Invited Guests;
- Members of the Media;
- Ladies and Gentlemen:

WELCOME

I am honoured to address you this morning at the opening ceremony for what I consider to be an extremely important series of meetings, and it is indeed a privilege for my Ministry to host the ILO/Cinterfor 41st Technical Committee meeting.

10 years ago, I represented Trinidad and Tobago and presented at a Technical Committee Meeting like this in 2003 at La Antigua Guatemala.

Anyone who knows me, or has ever heard me speak would understand that I am passionate about education AND training. I believe that in a developing nation such as ours, and many of those represented here today, vocational training is equally as important as formal tertiary education, if we are to create a labour force capable of driving our economies and sustaining growth.

Furthermore, I am determined to ensure that training in the informal sector receives due attention, in order all citizens, regardless of financial status, geographic location, creed and race, to have an opportunity to learn, develop, grow, and improve their quality of life.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my primary objective as Minister of TEST is to explore and maintain a variety of viable avenues for education and training. For too long, university based education has been seen as the only legitimate route to educational advancement, with technical and vocational, education and training looked down upon as the route for those with no other choice. This narrow view diminishes the value of the informal sector to every industry, and may compel individuals to pursue studies in areas which are deemed preferable, as opposed to those which they enjoy and in which they are talented and equally as important, those which are in demand.

My goal for the last decade has been to close this gap, and minimize the conundrum created by the lack of **“parity of esteem”** between tertiary academic education and vocational training. While serving as the CEO of the National Training Agency, as its very first employee and pioneer in 1999, and later on as the Chairman of CANTA, a position I assumed after my friend Robert Gregory from Jamaica, I was determined to find some way to at least START to level this playing field. We continued extensive discussions with Dr. Lucy Steward, the Registrar of the Caribbean Examinations Council or CXC, towards the goal of introducing the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) into the education system. Previously, each CARICOM member state had individual national qualifications, and I was convinced that the creation of a Caribbean based credential was necessary to create a universal, benchmarked TVET qualification backed by CARICOM as a whole.

In 2007, our efforts culminated in the signing of an agreement by CXC, the Ministry of Education, the NTA and CANTA to introduce the CVQ into secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. Other islands were to follow. Subsequently, the CVQ was accepted as an entry-level qualification into the pre-engineering programme at the faculty of engineering at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, in Trinidad. And, I'm proud to let you know that students who have completed this bridging programme are now pursuing full engineering degree programmes. In addition, the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) has also agreed to accept the CVQ as matriculation requirements for those seeking to pursue undergraduate degrees and technical certification.

I give you this brief history, to show the ongoing commitment of our government to training and education, both formal and informal, as a critical path to our it's strategy for long term, sustainable development. We have therefore extended the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE), through which the government subsidizes 100% of the cost of tuition for citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, to vocational studies; again, levelling the playing field; again, facilitating that parity of esteem in other words, free education and training.

WORK OF ILO

With this history in mind, I welcome all of you, our distinguished guests, to Trinidad and Tobago. We are particularly proud that we can share in the fiftieth (50th) anniversary celebration of ILO/CINTERFOR which coincides with this meeting, and it gives us great pleasure to acknowledge this achievement in the form of a gala dinner tomorrow evening.

The ILO/CINTERFOR's strong commitment to the dissemination of knowledge and purposeful service over the last half century has resulted in great transformation, not only of technical and vocational education and training in many countries, but of the lives of many individual citizens of the world. Please join me in applauding this organisation for its fifty years of work.

ACKNOWLEDGING LAST MEETING'S ACHIEVEMENTS

I am also pleased to be part of conferences such as these which are not just "talk shops" but instead, think tanks that spawn innovative ideas and tangible projects to be implemented after we leave these spaces. The last ILO/CINTERFOR meeting was held in 2011 in Panama City with a focus on creating "Innovation in vocational training for a decent and productive work". I am heartened to know that the sharing, learning, and exploration of ideas at the last the conference resulted into many collaborations, especially within the Caribbean and Latin America.

South-South Cooperation

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is clear to me that this room is filled with visionaries, representatives of governments representatives of business, labour and Agencies who share my own passion for technical and vocational training, all supported by strong, ensuring institutions such as the ILO, whose commitment and effectiveness are without question.

As the saying goes, "no man is an island". And while many of us represent islands in the literal and geographic sense, when it comes to our workforce, there is much to be gained from collaboration and the sharing of ideas and best practices.

The purpose of this conference is, as we are all aware, to focus on South-South Collaboration and Triangular Cooperation in Vocational Training. Of course, the idea of South-South cooperation is anything but new; The term is well known and used by economists and politicians the world over in reference to strategic exchanges among developing nations for mutual benefit and progress.

And then, there is the other half of the theme "Triangular cooperation" which typically includes traditional donors such as the OECD/DAC, and two developing nations; one serving as a new donor and the other as a beneficiary.

Gone are the days when we look exclusively to developed nations as the primary source of expertise and direction. The developing nations of the world have shown our massive potential for creativity, entrepreneurship and leadership. We have seen the conventional model turned on its head, with some of the largest global firms having their roots in developing nations, and with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) emanating from the "south" to the developed world, and to other developing nations. Some of the greatest scientific breakthroughs and social transformation tools have come out of our own institutions and think tanks in recent years.

These trends tell me in no uncertain terms, that we, right here in this room, and our tremendous brain power at home, have the potential to answer our own, and each other's questions. We can put our heads together and develop never-before-seen solutions to the challenges of the developing world, including in the areas of education and vocational training.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am thrilled about some of the unique opportunities for collaboration arising in recent times.

- For example, the President of Brazil recently announced the “Science Without Borders” programme, whereby 2015, approximately 150,000 Brazilians will be encouraged to pursue post graduate qualifications in universities outside of Brazil. I am certain many of these students will look to the progressive institutions in the nations represented here today.
- Another success story – our very own Trinidad and Tobago. We possess over 100 years of experience and expertise in production, refining and marketing of oil, gas and petrochemicals. Our skilled labour force is highly sought after, with Trinidadians and Tobagonians being recruited to work in oil and gas across the planet.
- And we are leading the charge in collaborating with other developing nations for the development of energy specific training and education. <Example of Nigeria> <Drilling School> <Petrobras University and UTT> Equatorial Guinea, Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, Guyana, Suriname, Grenada.
- OAS, a leading construction company coming out of Brazil recently duplicated its productivity school right here in Trinidad at the site of construction of the San Fernando to Pt. Fortin highway. <Worker productivity and the Digital Classroom>
- Our very own CANTA is a brilliant success story. Here in the Caribbean we can boast of having the only system in the world which sees a region’s National Training Agencies brought under one umbrella. We have created a harmonized system with regards to industry-driven standards of our regional qualifications, and ultimately the development of a competitive regional workforce. In fact, the Head of CANTA is requested to speak to Latin American organizations who wish to establish a similar model.
- TT NVQ, BNVQ, NVQJ

So, the foundation is laid. The models are in place. The lines of communication and collaboration have been opened. The question I see before us today, then, is how do we take this development theory of South-South and Triangular collaboration and put it into practice? How do we apply these models to TVET as nations, and as a group, to bring about actual results for our people?

These are the questions we will answer collectively throughout the course of this conference. But allow me to urge you, that while we answer the “HOW?” let us never lose sight of the “WHY?”

IMPORTANCE OF TVET

TVET is now recognised as a key element for addressing some of socio-economic ailments plaguing countries across the globe. It is a tool for empowering citizens, alleviating poverty, and addressing unemployment and labour shortages arising from the mismatch in skills and jobs.

The latter, this misalignment between education and employment has resulted in a global phenomenon of high youth unemployment. In fact, a recent McKinsey publication reported that internationally, 75 million young people are unemployed, that is 12.6% of global youth, and at the same time, only 43% of employers report that there are enough qualified candidates to fill vacancies. In addition, at the opening ceremony for the Eighth ILO Meeting of Caribbean Labour Ministers last week Tuesday, the Director General for the ILO, Guy Ryder was published in our local newspaper as stating that 20 per cent of young people are unemployed in the Caribbean North Africa, Eurozone.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you would no doubt agree that these statistics are alarming. How can we continue to invest heavily in educating our people, if after years of study they cannot find a job? How can we spend billions of dollars in promoting our industries and sectors, only to have firms languishing for lack of manpower? Meanwhile, young people across the world, and I am sure in our very own nations, grow restless and frustrated. There is an urgent and critical need for calibration between our education systems and our industries to ensure that our people pursue courses of study which prepare them for an actual job! Graduate Glut!

I emphasise TVET is a critical piece of this puzzle. It must be recognised as a valid and valuable route for any young person, or anyone who wishes to retool or re-enter the workforce. It is a vehicle for preparing

the academic graduate for the work place, and creates opportunities for **low paid, low skilled workers** to become **highly skilled, highly paid** workers.

Expose to one!

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, has taken major steps towards understanding this dilemma and addressing it in an aggressive manner:

- We have introduced the Jobs and Career Coaches <elaborate>
- We launched the Workforce Assessment Centres in 2011 <elaborate> Social Inclusion.
- This year we introduced the Masters programme in Technical Vocational Education at the University of West Indies. Bachelors in TVET, UTT. This Masters Programme acts as a bridge for TVET practitioners to become skilled in instructional design, education and training, leadership and workforce occupational analysis, among other key pedagogical areas; So completing the architecture of a seamless dual education system.
- The Center for Workforce Research and Development: This centre was established at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine to create a more robust linkage between the labour market and the outputs of higher education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago. It is expected to be staffed and fully operational by the new academic year and will support existing labour market information and produce critical labour market surveys, tracer studies of graduates, and skills gaps analyses and assessments.

In January of this year, the CWRD through the University of the West Indies entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the **Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University** in Washington DC to transfer knowledge and expertise in labour trends, education and training, as well as development policies.

JOBS REPORT

PROPOSAL FOR OUTCOME OF MEETING

Ladies and Gentlemen, my own personal philosophy and the slogan of the Ministry of TEST is: **“BUILDING THE BRAINS” OF OUR NATION “UNLEASHING THE HUMAN POTENTIAL”**. This is what TVET is about; creating opportunities for our people to excel and prosper through a demand led education and training system.

Let us commit to maintaining the track record of action and progress demonstrated after the last conference. Much effort will be needed over the coming years if ambitious education and training targets will be met, and it is my hope that this 41st Technical Meeting will be seen to lead the global debate in advocacy of TVET, and enhancing its role in developing more equitable and sustainable societies.

In this context, I would like to leave you with three opportunities for South-South collaboration which I would like for us to consider:

1. The creation of reciprocal agreements for TVET, using the CANTA model. Countries with national credit and qualifications frameworks that provide for articulation, may consider signing of such agreements, as facilitated by ILO/CINTERFOR, to promote:
 - a. Mobility of qualifications, students and faculty;
 - b. Recognition of qualifications and labour mobility;
 - c. Improvement of parity of esteem for TVET and skills qualifications.
2. The second opportunity is to engage the Center for Workforce Research and Development, the only institution of its kind in the Caribbean, in deliberate coordination with other such institutions in the global south with which the ILO/Cinterfor may network. Such engagement would be for the purpose of joint research, the sharing of relevant workforce data and the enhancement of our repository of studies and statistics in this important area.
3. Finally, let us brainstorm some innovative and unique programmes for targeting NEETs. (such as WAC).

As I end my address today, I must express my deepest appreciation and commendation to Martha Pacheco, the Director of ILO/Cinterfor, for embracing my call to have this meeting in Trinidad and Tobago. A first for T&T

I also recognize those who toiled in the trenches to see us to this point. People such as Robert Gregory, Myrna Bernard, Paul Payne, Kenneth Dunn Smith, Esther Braithewaite. Estellita Reanne, George Garmerdinger (ILO), Pedro Daniel Weinberg, Gonzalo Erana, and Fernando Vargas from Uruguay.

Finally, I thank the Chairman, Board of Directors, Executive and Staff of the NTA who led the effort in hosting this conference on behalf of the Ministry.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you, and I look forward to three days of interactive and productive discussions.

Conference in Trinidad

Ladies and Gentlemen, with this strong foundation in place, Trinidad and Tobago is read to, as they say, "take things to the next level". Over the last three (3) years, the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training has started looking outwards

To the Chairman and Board of Directors, the Executive Leadership Team and members of staff at National Training Agency who lead the effort in hosting this event on behalf of the Ministry – congratulations on your stewardship in promoting quality knowledge exchange and active cooperation among many international agencies responsible for vocational training. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished keynote and plenary speakers for the next three days.