

## National E-Commerce strategy for T&T 2025-2030 unveiled

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO's National E-Commerce Strategy 2025-2030 was officially launched yesterday, with Trade Minister Paula Gopee- Scoon calling it a catalyst for entrepreneurship and the growth of small and medium- sized enterprises.

The launch took place at the Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre yesterday.

Gopee-Scoon described the new strategy as a 'transformative step' towards strengthening the country's digital landscape and reshaping business operations, building on the foundation of the 2017-2021 National E-Commerce Strategy.

'This Strategy, the first in the Caribbean developed by UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), is a robust document based on the sound results of an eTrade Readiness Assessment. The Assessment formed part of the methodology to develop the Strategy and analysed seven policy areas which are instrumental to e-commerce and identified gaps and opportunities for Trinidad and Tobago. It highlighted the areas in which Trinidad and Tobago has made significant progress such as robust digital infrastructure with a strong ICT sector, high mobile phone penetration and internet access, a well-established transport infrastructure by road, sea and air and the presence of supportive policies and orders in place to facilitate e-payments,' Gopee- Scoon said.

She said the overall strategic mission of the Strategy is 'to create and maintain an enabling environment that facilitates and promotes the use of e-commerce in Trinidad and Tobago for domestic and international markets.'

Gopee-Scoon said the Strategy prescribes a series of targeted initiatives across four areas of focus to ensure Trinidad and Tobago is able to fully harness the potential of e-commerce by: **i.** Continuing legal and regulatory development for e-commerce-this will improve legal certainty and allow for further harmonisation regarding electronic transactions, electronic contracts and signatures, cybersecurity and data protection. It also supports cross-border e-commerce and allows for enhanced consumer protection and protection for intellectual property. **ii.** Developing e-commerce awareness and skills to ensure that the citizens, businesses and the private sector benefit. It is imperative that we have insights into e-commerce skills needs across all sectors, including through the collection of gender, age, location (rural/urban) and disability disaggregated data as this allows for targeted policy reforms and support programmes. **iii.** Supporting business adoption of e-commerce by ensuring that e-payment and logistics services are integrated with low-cost cloud-based e-commerce shopping services. This will encourage and assist MSMEs to set up bank accounts to facilitate increased use of digital payments. **iv.** Enhancing trade facilitation and logistics to support e-commerce by improving the throughput of goods by customs and data exchange between customs administrations and by improving the collection and delivery of small parcels in rural areas and reducing the packaging costs for MSMEs.

'We expect that the Strategy will fuel a wave of entrepreneurship and business innovation across Trinidad and Tobago and open doors for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to create new revenue streams and scale their businesses in both the local and global market,' Gopee-Scoon said.

'SME development and the creation of an enabling business environment remains a priority for this Government. This is evidenced by the various grants and initiatives offered by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and through the Trinidad

and Tobago Trade and Investment Promotion Agency,' she said.

Gopee-Scoon said the effective implementation of this Strategy will ensure that Trinidad and Tobago is not left behind, and that it will lay the foundation for an e-commerce eco-system that will unlock opportunities for businesses, entrepreneurs, and consumers alike.

'As recognised during the development of the Strategy, the private sector, civil society, international partners, and academic institutions all have a critical role to play. We intend to continue close collaboration during the implementation phase,' she said.

Gopee-Scoon said apart from launching the National E-Commerce Strategy, the government will also be moving 'swiftly ahead' with implementation.

She added that the next step is to establish the National E-Commerce Committee to formalise the collaboration. This committee will be co-chaired by the permanent secretaries of the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Digital Transformation.

'Our focus is clear, to position Trinidad and Tobago as a leader in e-commerce and digital trade. We are at the most exciting juncture of this strategy, where plans start coming to life and today shows that this is officially underway. The Strategy and constitution of the committee, as well as immediate commencement of training demonstrates the MTI's commitment towards economic growth and empowerment of citizens,' she said.