THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

MINISTRY OF FINANCE & THE ECONOMY

Speech by the Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy

at the Presentation of the Open Data Readiness Assessment Report Press Conference

Friday May 1, 2014 at 12:00 noon

Ministry of Science and Technology
Conference Room, Level 19
Tower D, International Waterfront Complex

Dr. The Honourable Rupert Griffith, Minister of Science and Technology;

Permanent Secretaries Ms. Ingrid Seerattan and Mr. Vishnu Dhanpaul;

Mr. Andrew Stott, Ms. Eva Clemente and Ms. Rosa Vasileva of the World Bank Group;

Members of the Media;

Other distinguished and specially invited guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good afternoon!

Allow me to thank the Ministry of Science and Technology for organizing this press conference and for giving me the opportunity to address you on our progress towards an Open Data Initiative for Trinidad and Tobago.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Open Data Initiative is part of Government's National Broadband Plan for Development. This National Broadband Plan, which is a critical component of Government's National ICT Plan smarTT, will ensure that all citizens across Trinidad and Tobago have access to high-speed broadband connectivity - an important driver of economic growth and development and the associated job creation and a better standard of living for citizens.

Having recognized these positive impacts of a comprehensive Broadband policy, Government approached the World Bank Group and requested their assistance in the development of a broadband strategy which would transform Trinidad and Tobago into a diversified, information and knowledge driven economy. On October 12 2014 the World Bank Group was engaged to provide specialist consultancy services in a number of supply and demand side initiatives for broadband.

The Supply Side Initiatives would help extend Broadband service throughout the country and includes:

- preparation of the feasibility study, the design and the tender documents for a Public Private Partnership (PPP) scheme aimed at creating a fully functional national broadband backbone in Trinidad and Tobago and the inter-island submarine cable system;

- preparation of the feasibility study, the design and the tender documents for a PPP for the creation of an alternative submarine cable landing station (inclusive of a Carrier Hotel) in the country; and

- review of the existing legal and regulatory framework.

The Demand Side Initiatives would help increase the impact of any supply-side action and includes:

- estimation of the Location Readiness Index for the country and development of an IT and IT-enabled services strategy and action plan which will increase the competitiveness of the outsourcing and off-shoring industry; and

- carrying out of an open data readiness assessment and preparing a sector strategy for the country and organizing events to showcase the potential of open data in innovation.

Ladies and gentlemen, The World Bank Group has assigned two teams to Trinidad and Tobago for this project, each team staffed with competent and experienced personnel who have implemented broadband strategies in developed and developing countries across the globe.

These teams have undertaken a number of Missions to Trinidad and Tobago since September 2014 and with the help of our Governmental Execution Team and Open Data Readiness Assessment Team have made significant strides on the Supply Side Initiatives and the Demand Side Initiatives thus far.

On the Supply Side, the World Bank Team initiated discussions with internet service providers to partner with Government to establish an alternate submarine cable landing station.

The Team and the internet service providers noted the importance of having an alternate site which will give this country redundancy and reliability in the event of a natural or human disaster.

The World Bank Team together with the Governmental Execution Team and Open Data Readiness Assessment Team visited potential locations across Trinidad and Tobago and identified a number of feasible sites during their February Mission.

The Team conducted an assessment of our current backbone infrastructure and identified and visited areas with inadequate broadband coverage.

They also initiated discussions with the major internet service providers on partnering with Government to expand broadband coverage to these under-served areas.

On the demand side, a feasibility study of an Open Data Initiative for Trinidad and Tobago is currently being assessed. The World Bank Team assigned to this Initiative is here with us today and their team leader, Mr. Andrew Stott, will address you shortly.

Ladies and gentlemen, open data, though a relatively new concept, has improved the public policies of Governments across the globe.

An Open Data Initiative for Trinidad and Tobago is the stepping stone to our ultimate goal of being open, accountable and

transparent in the public sector and in the delivery of public services.

Government showed its commitment to being an Open Government when we joined the Open Government Partnership in 2010. Ladies and gentlemen we are one of only two countries in the Caribbean to join the Open Government Partnership.

Further to this we established the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and are now in the process of implementing the Public Procurement Act of 2015 which will improve transparency and accountability of contracts awards and tenders.

In February of this year, the World Bank Team for Open Data, at the request of the Government, met with stakeholders in the private and public sector to assess their readiness for an Open

Data Initiative - an initiative that will further signal our commitment to Open Government.

The World Bank Team noted a strong demand for data from business, universities and civil society; it also noted that our citizens possess the skills which could turn data into 'apps' and other added value for Trinidad and Tobago.

Furthermore the World Bank Team recognizes that Trinidad and Tobago is well placed to move forward with an Open Data programme since programmes such as smarTT and external stakeholders prototypes of open data 'apps' currently exist.

Ladies and gentlemen before I hand you over to the World Bank Team to further elaborate on the findings and recommendations of the Open Data Readiness Assessment Study, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the World Bank Team, to the Government Execution Team and to the Open Data Readiness Assessment Team for their hard work and efforts on a Project which once executed will empower our

citizens and transition Trinidad and Tobago into a knowledge-based economy.

I thank you!