



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade and Industry

Port of Spain Fashion Week 2020 Media Launch

ADDRESS

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON,
MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

NOVEMBER 4TH, 2020

Salutations

- Ms. Crystal Cunningham, Project Manager of Port of Spain Fashion Week
- Ms Lisa-Marie Daniel, General Manager of FashionTT
- Ms Lorraine O'Connor, Producer, POSFW 2020
- Ms Janine Charles-Farray, POSFW
- Mr Olivier Maumaire, General Manager, Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre
- Ms Andrea Davis, Country Manager, DHL
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

I am pleased to join you today for the launch of *Port of Spain Fashion Week 2020*. Let me first congratulate Ms. Cunningham and the organizing team for exploring all avenues, in accordance with the National Health Regulations, to arrive at a safe and impactful platform to stage this year's event.

The organisers have created a unique experience for Port of Spain Fashion Week 2020 as demonstrated by the creative engagement of local and regional designers for their virtual runway presentations. The 3-day Artisan Market, termed the Home, Fashion and Garden Pop Up, has a virtual as well as a physical dimension to it, to allow artisans to offer for sale items such as handcrafted jewelry, wood craft, swimwear, kaftans and local designer apparel. The collaboration with industry partners such as the Hilton Hotel, DHL and WiPay is also important. The webinars by DHL and WiPay on "Getting Export Ready" and exploring online payment solutions will provide valuable information to fashion entrepreneurs seeking to grow your business.

We are now witnessing that social media, e-commerce, virtual showcases and online marketplaces have emerged as the optimal way to engage clients, generate income, and thereby preserve and create jobs. Designers, who have embraced technological advances, are now able to expand their reach into global markets widening their client base, including members of the Caribbean diaspora to whom I urge you to make a special outreach.

I encourage you to sharpen your competitive edge and create niche markets. Ensure that you remain relevant within this ever-changing global environment – build capacity, benchmark your products against the appropriate international standards, use new technologies and continually innovate your systems and processes. In this regard, the entities which partnered to create the **POS Fashion Week App** and incorporated the "**See Now, Buy Now**" concept must be applauded. This App will connect the Fashion World locally, regionally and internationally to Trinidad and Tobago's designers and artisans, with an e-commerce platform to facilitate doing business.

Trinidad and Tobago is not unique in the hybrid virtual/live event being staged over the next few days. At the New York Fashion Week in February this year, Steven Kolb, chief executive of the Council of Fashion Designers of America, stated and I quote "Ultimately fashion is a business, and Fashion Week is a platform for designers to do business...[It] is about jobs, people's livelihoods and it is about moving forward, but cautiously, with safety in mind."

The Government is resolved to continue the development of the creative industries, in which fashion features, as the sector plays an important part in the ongoing diversification thrust. This has been articulated in the National Development Strategy 2016-2030/Vision 2030, the Report of the Roadmap to

Recovery Committee and the fiscal package proposed by the Minister of Finance and approved by the Parliament last month.

FashionTT is the arm of the Government to stimulate the business development and exports of the sector through various capacity building initiatives, such as the Fashion Value Chain Investment Programme and the Train the Trainers Programme in Bespoke Tailoring, Pattern Drafting, Cutting and Fitting. FashionTT is also partnering with the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) to establish a Garment Production Facility which, it is envisaged, will build export capacity and assist in positioning local products in international markets, creating sustainable employment and generating foreign exchange.

The Government is also making grant resources and capacity building programmes available. If your company is export-oriented, technology-driven and in need of new equipment, you may be interested in the Grant Fund Facility managed by the Ministry of Trade and Industry or the Research and Development Facility. ExporTT's Co-Financing Facility also seeks to bolster companies' export capacity and penetrate new markets. The Government has also allocated \$50M for ***Overseas Market Promotion and Development – Local Manufacturers*** which will enhance existing support to exporters.

Further, I want to encourage the female-owned fashion businesses to register on the SheTrades Platform of the International Trade Centre (ITC). SheTrades promotes collaboration among female-owned businesses through online forums where participants can exchange ideas, share experiences and reach solutions to challenges often faced by women in business. Last week, we launched this initiative, making Trinidad and Tobago the first country in the Caribbean to establish a SheTrades Hub, linking members to over 25 countries and allowing female entrepreneurs to receive technical training, professional mentorship, attend international business events and compete in international tenders and procurement processes. This initiative will be implemented by exporTT and guidance can also be sought through CreativeTT/FashionTT.

The MTI continues to explore new opportunities and develop partnerships with various public and private sector entities aimed at growing local businesses including the fashion sector. I encourage you to work with us in driving our economy forward.

In closing, I again want to congratulate the organizers of POSFW 2020, the collaborators and the participating designers and entrepreneurs, who contributed their time and talent, to shine a spotlight on our local fashion industry. POS Fashion Week promises to be exciting, novel and informative. Thank you for your ongoing contribution to the overall growth and development of the fashion sector.

I wish you a successful Fashion Week.

