



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Address

by

THE HONOURABLE STUART R. YOUNG, MP

Minister of Energy and Energy Industries

and

Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister

at the

Maritime Link Up Webinar 2021

Hosted by the American Caribbean Maritime Foundation

August 11, 2021

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. It is indeed a privilege for me to participate at this Maritime Webinar hosted by the American Caribbean Maritime Foundation in association with the University of Trinidad and Tobago, formally themed “Your Education, Your Future: Connecting Caribbean Youth with Job Opportunities in the Blue Economy”.

I take this opportunity to commend the American Caribbean Maritime Foundation (ACMF) which in its short history working with educational institutions such as the University of Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean Maritime University of Jamaica (CMU), the LJM Maritime Academy of Bahamas (LJMMA), the Caribbean Association of National Training Authorities, the Women’s Chapter of the International Maritime Organization and the Caribbean Shipping Association has raised the level of maritime awareness and successfully promoted the maritime sector as a viable career option for aspiring students in the Caribbean.

All of the organizations represented here today can attest to the importance of the maritime industry. For the Caribbean in particular, due to our archipelagic nature, the maritime industry is critical in facilitating the import and export of goods within the region and further afield. It is therefore only logical that our people should be suitably trained and employed throughout the maritime industry, whether on seafaring vessels or in shore-based operations.

For Trinidad and Tobago maritime services play a critical role in supporting our offshore energy sector. As the development of the hydrocarbon industries of countries such as Guyana and Suriname picks up, it is expected that the demand for a range of maritime services will follow suit. Construction of the nation’s first heavy-lift berth is already underway in Guyana, and similar infrastructure works are being

planned for Suriname. These investments and developments in infrastructure need to be accompanied by commensurate development of our CARICOM region's human resources.

The Caribbean and particularly the English Speaking Caribbean are coastal states bordering two of the largest marine areas in the world in the form the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The North America sea route carries the heaviest traffic of all sea routes. These and other sea routes are important to the shipping industry as shipping is one of the life blood of the global economy.

The international shipping industry is responsible for carriage of 90% of global trade and without shipping, intercontinental trade would not be possible. This global trade is enabled by a global fleet of over 74,000 merchant ships manned by seafarers of virtually every nationality. The worldwide population of seafarers serving on internationally trading merchant ships is estimated at approximately 1,890,000 seafarers.

This region including Latin America is responsible for approximately 10% of global loaded goods. Yet with that volume of traffic the region is grossly underrepresented with respect to personnel employed in the maritime sector.

With projected expansions in seaborne trade, the merchant fleet is projected to exceed 79,000 ships by 2025, which will in turn require increased manpower. It is estimated that there will be a need for an additional 89,510 officers by 2026 to operate the world merchant fleet. Therefore, the industry must significantly increase training and recruitment levels if it is to avoid a serious shortage in the total supply of officers by 2025. This is an opportunity for us in the region and we

must not miss out. Increased collaboration between the industry and training institutions is required to address the manpower shortage, and to provide trained personnel with the skillsets required by the industry.

The skillsets are continuously evolving with the introduction of revolutionary technology such as sensor technology, robotic automation, cloud based internet systems, the movement to megaships and environmentally friendly fuels. Technology has become an important tool in driving efficiency, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and minimizing waste. However, with the usage of internet based technology the occurrence of digital attacks to networks, systems and programs have elevated the importance of cyber security.

The global shortage in seafarers provides a opportunity for UTT, CMU and LJMMA to expand and to adapt their programmes to meet the growing and technology driven needs of the maritime industry.

However, Training Institutions cannot carry the responsibility alone for ensuring that our countries are appropriately represented in the manning of maritime operations. Stakeholders comprising Governments, Regional Shipping Operations and Port Authorities must leverage their influence and/or authority on shipping operators whose ships traverse the Caribbean Sea, the Panama Canal and the Atlantic Ocean.

As a well-placed transshipment hub, with some of the largest transshipment ports in the world, and heavily used sea routes such as the Panama Canal, it estimated that 60% of the worldwide shipping traffic passes through the Caribbean Sea. As coastal states, we receive the majority of imported goods and services via transportation by sea. Other major commercial activities taking place within the

region and which provide great economic benefit to their shareholders include the cruise ship industry, the oil and gas sector and the fuels market. It would be in the interest of these industries to have good relations with the stakeholders in the region. There is an opportunity here for Governments and Interest Groups to leverage their influence to ensure that these industries provide sustainable employment for our people, and that we capitalize on the opportunities which will enable the building of capacity and diversity in our maritime workforce.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has identified the Maritime Sector as a key sector for development with a focus on port operations, ship repair and dry docking, and marine services including off shore bulk transshipment, bunkering, and maritime logistics. The transshipment business accounts for 40% of the country's Ports activities which average port throughput of 600,000 TEUs, with the energy sector accounting for the highest volumes of imports and exports.

In recognition of the importance of the maritime sector, Government has introduced incentives to stimulate activity in the industry, such as import duty concessions for locally registered firms engaged in ship building and ship repair, value added tax exemption for repair service for ships engaged in commercial activity and an allowance to companies amounting to uplift of 50% of expenditure incurred in training of employees.

Our jurisdiction over the sector is in line to be enlarged if our current proposal before the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to extend the country's maritime borders beyond our continental shelf is successful. This will require an increase of our physical and human resources to properly manage the expanded marine resources.

The current activity and the realization of the potential of our maritime sector makes it imperative that we aggressively develop our human resources. In this regard as Minister of Energy and Energy Industries it is my intention to prioritize the maritime sector for the funding provided for training by the energy sector companies as part of their contractual obligations.

From a wider Caribbean perspective, the astute management of marine environment provides not only opportunity for economic growth but alignment with the global move to green and carbon neutral economies. As small island states, relative to our land mass, we have vast ocean resources at our disposal presenting a huge opportunity for boosting our economic growth and a responsibility to sustainably manage, protect and preserve our ocean now, for the present and future generations. We must continue to pursue an integrated approach to the building of the blue economy.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I conclude, once again I applaud the ACMF and its partner institutions for its invaluable contribution to the development of the human resources in the maritime industry, and more importantly, to the lives of its scholarship recipients. I must heartily praise Dr. Geneive Brown Metzger for the sterling work she performs in advancing the cause of Caribbean Nations in the Maritime Industry. I urge the partner institutions and those in attendance here today to continue to support the work of the ACMF and to continue to invest in our aspiring young people as they represent our best hope if Caribbean countries are to become a significant force in the global Maritime Industry.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.