



The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**CENTRAL FINANCE FACILITY CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY OF
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

(OPENING REMARKS)

Message By

Dr the Honourable Nyan Gadsby-Dolly

Minister of Education

Wednesday 8th March, 2023

PRE-RECORDED

SALUTATIONS:

- **Ms Letitia Telesford**, President - Central Finance Facility Co-Operative Society of Trinidad & Tobago (CFF)
- **Ms Anna-Lena Lochman** – Director, Green Financing at Sparkassenstiftung Germany
- **Lois Leslie** – Chartered Valuator, Environmentalist and Entrepreneur
- **Ms Margaret Sampson-Browne** – Vice President, Police Credit Union
- **Ms Cheryl Bowles** - Founder and Managing Director, CherMere Ltd.
- **Stephanie Khan** – Founder and Managing Director - KhanKonnnect You Ltd
- **CFF's Board of Directors**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Good morning,

Today, March 8th, the world celebrates International Women’s Day (IWD) to honour the progress that women have made in numerous fields and reflect on the resilience of women. The major goal of this global effort is gender parity around the world. Today’s forum presents an opportunity for reflection as it adopts the United Nation’s 2023 IWD theme: “DigitALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality.” This vantage point provides the stimulus for how we can champion the advancement of transformative technology and digital education, especially among women and girls.

At its core, the Central Finance Facility Co-Operative Society of Trinidad & Tobago (CFF) is about empowering its members both financially and socially, and being energetic in its call for equity among business cooperatives. And while this task may seem like a tremendous undertaking, it is steps such as these that bring about meaningful and favourable outcomes. More empowered members mean more empowered women, and the call for equity resounds with our own struggle as women.

Advancements in digital technology offer immense opportunities to address urgent development and humanitarian challenges; it is also vital for achieving our National Development Strategy: Vision 2030. We must, however, recognize that the opportunities the digital revolution present, to some measure, may also pose the risk of perpetuating existing patterns of gender inequality. Growing inequalities are becoming increasingly evident in the context of digital skills and access to technologies, with women still being left behind as a result of this digital gender divide.

Within the sphere of education, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has championed the implementation of equitable learning for all. While girls have the same opportunity as boys to pursue careers in STEM, Technology and Technical Studies, there is an obvious gender bias among the students that choose these careers. To help counter this, and expose our young women to these career paths, the National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST), an agency of the MOE, has taken a leading role in

facilitating the increased participation of women and girls in science through its partnership with Shell T&T on the Shell STREAM Programme, as well as its many outreach programmes in schools.

In recognition of the UN International Day of Women and Girls in Science on February 11, 2023, NIHERST posted the following on its Facebook page, and I quote “According to the latest UNESCO Science Report, only one in three researchers is a woman and in higher education, women represent just over 35% of graduates in STEM-related fields” end quote. The full and equal participation and leadership of women and girls in the science and technology communities is more important than ever, and as a woman with a research background, and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Organic Chemistry, I am more than supportive of this call for gender equality in STREAM.

Now is the time to recognize women’s contributions in research and innovation, smash stereotypes and defeat discrimination against

women and girls in science. Our position at the MoE remains resolute in ensuring all learners have the digital skills to succeed in today's technology-driven world. As the world pivots towards technology-based learning, girls must be equipped with digital literacy skills for long-term learning that enables them to navigate a changing world, and help to fill gaps in potential and ability which may have been perceived as insurmountable because of difference in gender.

Let us also acknowledge a less thought-of-fact – male underperformance in many academic areas, at every level, is of global concern. However, gender equality speaks to equity of opportunity; not female dominance over male. Therefore, male dominance in the fields of digital technology need not be seen as purely negative – it allows us women the room for improvement, even as the lessons learnt as to why male dominance is seen in these areas helps us to impact and improve male education in other spheres.

On International Women's Day, let us all, men and women alike, show our appreciation and celebration of women, while being mindful of what more still needs to be done to ensure that both women and men fulfil their greatest potential here in Trinidad & Tobago, and across the globe.

Thank you all and God bless.