



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Public Administration

MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**A Message from Senator the Honourable Allyson West,
Minister of Public Administration in recognition of International Girls in ICT Day
2020**

Today, I wish to join with the global community in celebrating International Girls in ICT Day, as observed by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the lead United Nations Agency for Information and Communications (ICT) under its “**Inspiring the Next Generation**”. This commemoration takes place every third Thursday in April and is aimed at encouraging girls and young women to pursue careers in the dynamic field of ICT. For developing countries like Trinidad and Tobago, this commemoration is also intended to celebrate the many women who have made their careers in the dynamic field of ICT.

This year especially, in light of the global pandemic facing us, brought on by the novel coronavirus, we look at ICT with new appreciation for its role in keeping us connected, and enabling the delivery of many essential services. Given the current crisis, the activities and events planned to commemorate this day have been shifted to online platforms, the very platforms that are increasingly being used during this global lock down to keep businesses, education and governments functioning during a very uncertain time. It is therefore the perfect time to pause and reflect on the many persons in general and women in particular who work in the ICT sector, often behind the scenes doing the essential tasks that allow us all to function by ensuring that we have the systems, networks and applications in place to facilitate our various activities. You are all unsung heroes.

The use of ICT now forms part of every job description, from lower level to top management positions, signifying that digital technology is now ubiquitous and the ability to use it, essential. There however continues to be a pressing need for a wider range of ICT

talents. Globally, there is an estimated shortfall of 2 million ICT employees, while only 1 in 4 ICT jobs are held by women. This growing gap between the digital skills needed by employers and the number of jobseekers with the required technical know-how means that qualified women in technical fields have a significant number of opportunities available to them.

As the Minister with responsibility for ICT, it is my considered view that commemoration of this day signifies our commitment to the greater application and usage of ICT within Government, and nationally, to bring about positive transformation in the economic, social and environmental landscapes. Trinidad and Tobago is seeking to further harness the potential of ICT in realising its sustainable development objectives, and has noted the importance of bridging the many digital divides, including the gender divide. This will ensure that the ICT sector is enriched by the contributions of both men and women, based on their unique but complementary perspectives and skills.

The Government therefore has developed and is implementing, the *ICT Blueprint - The National ICT Plan for the period 2018 to 2022*. This Plan, the digital enabler of the National Development Strategy, *Vision 2030*, comprises five Strategic Thrusts, the second of which is *Increasing Human Capacity*. This Thrust is particularly significant in the context of International Girls in ICT Day, as it seeks to develop a digitally literate population while promoting digital inclusion through which all citizens, male or female, able or differently-abled, have access to and can develop the skills to use ICT. Indeed, we have a strong foundation on which to build, based on the contributions already made through the collaborative efforts of a number of professionals within the field, including many key female leaders and IT professionals.

As we continue to drive national development forward, despite the global setbacks, the Public Service of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to providing opportunities for all, regardless of gender or circumstance, to access education in ICT fields, and to promote professional growth in the ICT sector. In closing, I wish to encourage all the Girls in ICT to keep charting and clearing new paths; to continue to provide mentorship to those who will follow in your footsteps; and to continue to take pride in the essential work that you do in bringing about positive transformation in the economic, social and environmental landscapes in our nation. Happy International Girls in ICT Day!

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