Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism

Beyond the Blueprint 2026 Opening Ceremony

Remarks by

Senator the Honourable Satyakama Maharaj

Minister of Trade, Investment and Tourism

Friday 30th October 2026

SALUTATIONS

- Mr. Benedict Hatem, Chairman of Tourism Trinidad Limited;
- Father Emmanuel Pierre;
- Ms. Christine Ferreira, Chief Executive Officer of Media Life Productions Limited;
- Senior representatives of local and regional tourism authorities and professional associations;
- Sponsors and exhibitors;
- Presenters and panellists of the Blueprint Academy;
- Members of the media;
- Distinguished guests;
- Ladies and gentlemen…

Good morning.

Good morning,
By the time a building opens, many of its most important economic decisions have already been made. Someone has specified the materials, selected the suppliers, commissioned the design, and awarded the contracts.

Those decisions determine how much of an investment becomes work for our people and how much business goes elsewhere. You make those decisions. That gives this room considerable influence over the economy we are trying to build.

That is why Beyond the Blueprint matters to the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism.
I commend Media Life Productions Limited for bringing together the people who design, finance, supply, and build. To our regional guests, welcome. We want you to discover businesses here that you will work with long after this exhibition.

Everyone in this industry understands how closely the parts of a project depend on each other. A design must be buildable. Materials must perform. Costs must be controlled. Deliveries must arrive on time.
One missed deadline can hold up several trades. A poor specification can leave a client paying for years through repairs, maintenance, or higher energy bills.

That commercial reality must shape our ambition for this sector.

We should be aiming for a larger Trinidad and Tobago share of the Caribbean's building expenditure.
Consider a regional hotel development. Before the first visitor arrives, there is work for architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, furniture manufacturers, interior designers, artists, and technology providers. Our businesses should be competing for that work and more of them should consider competing together.
An individual firm may have an excellent product but be unable to meet the full requirements of a large development. Several firms working together may offer compatible specifications, coordinated delivery, and a stronger proposition.

Could a furniture manufacturer and an interior designer pursue a hospitality contract together? Could our architects, engineers, and building-product suppliers assemble an offer for a regional developer?
Those are conversations worth having here. A buyer with a project to deliver wants businesses that can make the job work.

This exhibition allows products to be examined, technical questions to be answered, and specifications to be discussed directly with the people responsible for meeting them.

To our local developers and clients, I make a particular appeal: consider local capability while the project is still being designed.

By the time procurement begins, some opportunities may already have been designed out. A specification may favour an overseas product where a suitable local option could have been considered.
Buy Local, Build Trinbago has a practical meaning in this industry: know what our manufacturers and professionals can deliver, and give them a fair opportunity to compete.

Quality, safety, and value remain essential. Our firms must earn the business. They must also have a chance to bid for it.
Government has responsibilities too.

You commit money against schedules, employ people against expected work, and price projects against assumptions that can change while a decision is pending.

Our engagement with this industry must be equally specific: what prevents a manufacturer from fulfilling an overseas order, a professional firm from entering a regional market, or an investor from bringing an underused property back into productive use.

Those are problems around which useful work can be organised.

I therefore welcome the proposed Blueprint Academy and Expert Perception Report. The people delivering projects can tell us where skills are scarce, what repeatedly causes delays, and what would help local firms qualify for larger contracts.

Gathered consistently, that knowledge can make Beyond the Blueprint a valuable place for industry to learn and government to listen.

There is also a distinct tourism opportunity: making Trinidad and Tobago a place that Caribbean developers, designers, and buyers return to each year to do business.

That reputation must be earned through relevant exhibitors, useful exchanges, and meetings that produce results. As it grows, hotels, restaurants, transport providers, and other local businesses can benefit from those visits.

Over the coming days, look beyond your own stand and your usual contacts. Find a business whose expertise complements yours. Ask buyers what would make your offer competitive. Establish what you need to win work in another market.

I want regional developers to leave with Trinidad and Tobago firms on their next tender list and our exhibitors to leave knowing what it will take to win that business.

The next Caribbean project is already being planned. Let us make sure more of our people have a part in building it.

I commend all exhibitors and the Academy for showcasing the best of the Caribbean.
It is my pleasure to declare Beyond the Blueprint 2026 officially open.
I thank you.