

NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY

**Sustainability,
Resilience and the
Future of Business**



In this Issue:

CEO Perspective By Kendell Sandy

Closing the Gap By Alex Smith

HSE Awards Finalists

ESG and Sustainability By Giselle Hudson

30th Annual

HSSE CONFERENCE

INTELLIGENT AND RESILIENT BY DESIGN



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The opinions expressed in the editorial contributions in Linkage may not necessarily be those of AMCHAM T&T. We welcome any comments you might have! Simply email a "Letter to the Editor" to the AMCHAM T&T Secretariat to

kennedymaraj@amchamtt.com

AMCHAM T&T'S VISION

As **The Pathway To The Americas**, AMCHAM T&T is focussed on the stimulation and promotion of trade, investment and export oriented growth in the Western Hemisphere.

AMCHAM T&T'S MISSION

AMCHAM T&T will add value to our member companies within the following key focus areas:

- Enhancement of Competitiveness
- Generation of New Business and Market Access for Services/Goods
- Influence on Policies and Legislation
- Transfer of Knowledge
- Contribution to Sustainable Development

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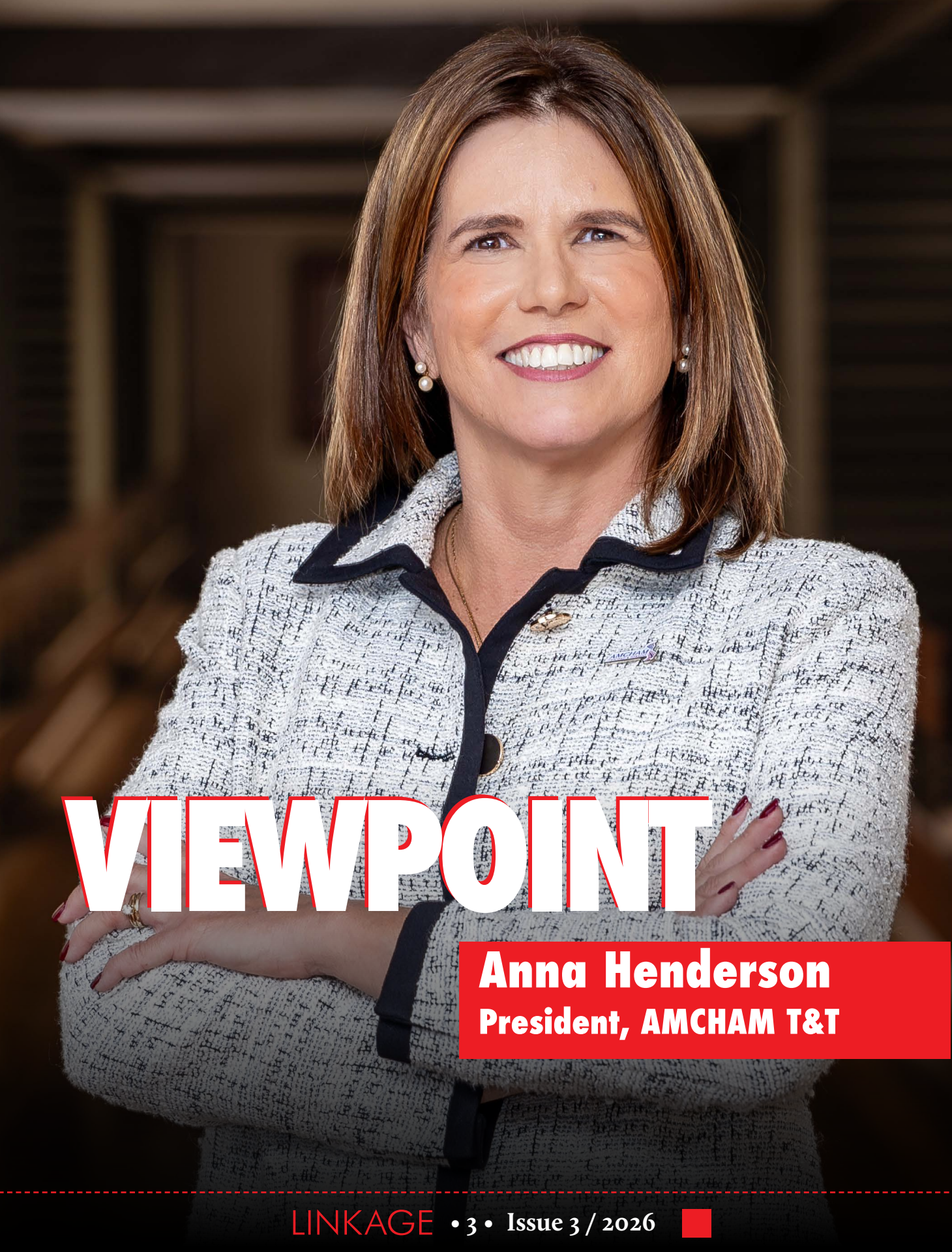
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A professional portrait of Anna Henderson, a woman with shoulder-length brown hair, smiling and wearing a grey tweed jacket with a dark blue collar. She has her arms crossed and is wearing pearl earrings and a ring.

VIEWPOINT

Anna Henderson
President, AMCHAM T&T

VIEWPOINT

By Anna Henderson

AMCHAM T&T PRESIDENT

Uncertainty has always been part of doing business. What has changed is the pace at which it reaches us, our willingness to commit to it – and how quickly developments in one part of the world can affect businesses, industries and communities here in Trinidad and Tobago.

From changing markets and technology to evolving consumer expectations, shifting business models and unexpected disruptions, leaders today are being asked to make important decisions without having the benefit of complete information or certainty about what lies ahead.

That is the reality of the environment in which we operate.

And, uncertainty cannot mean inaction.

In fact, some of the most important opportunities for businesses emerge during periods of change. When familiar conditions shift, we are often challenged to rethink how we operate, where we invest, how we manage risk, and where we see potential for growth.

For me, navigating uncertainty is therefore not about trying to predict every challenge before it happens. It is about building the capacity to respond when circumstances change – and having the perspective to recognise opportunity when it does.

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That requires thoughtful leadership.

It means asking better questions. It means looking beyond immediate pressures and considering the longer-term implications of the decisions we make. It means being willing to adapt, to learn and, when necessary, to change course. It means being willing to listen to the voice of your team. Sometimes they know better than you.

It also means understanding that resilience is built long before a crisis arrives.

The strongest organisations are not simply those that recover quickly from disruption. They are those that have invested in their people, systems, relationships, and decision-making processes well in advance. They create the conditions that allow them to respond with greater confidence when the unexpected happens.

This is particularly important for businesses in Trinidad and Tobago as we continue to navigate a changing economic and global environment. We have an opportunity to strengthen the businesses and industries we have, while remaining open to new ideas, new partnerships, and new possibilities.

That is one of the reasons **LINKAGE** remains so important to AMCHAM T&T.

Our magazine is a platform for knowledge-sharing, business insight, and meaningful conversation. Through the experiences and perspectives of our members, thought leaders and partners, we can better understand the forces shaping our business environment and learn from one another.

*Our magazine is a platform for
knowledge-sharing, business insight, and
meaningful conversation.*



As you explore this issue, I encourage you to consider not only the challenges facing your organisation today, but also what those challenges may reveal about the opportunities of tomorrow. Be willing to consider what may be working today may not work tomorrow.

We may not always know what is coming next. But we can choose how prepared we are to meet it.

And perhaps that is the most important lesson in navigating uncertainty: we do not need to have all the answers to move forward. We need the willingness to learn, the courage to adapt, flexibility to experiment and the vision to see what is possible.

Alternative paragraph to the one above:

Uncertainty never fully lifts, and it doesn't have to. What carries us forward isn't knowing the answer but being willing to look for it: to learn when we're unsure, to adapt when plans fall apart, to experiment when no path is clear, and to hold a vision of what could be. Answers come to those who keep moving. The work is to take the next step anyway."

As AMCHAM T&T continues to support the business community through advocacy, engagement and knowledge-sharing, we remain committed to helping our members navigate change and build for the future.

I hope you enjoy this issue of **LINKAGE**. ■

*As AMCHAM T&T continues to support
the business community through
advocacy, engagement and knowledge-
sharing, we remain committed to helping
our members navigate change and build
for the future.*



WELCOME

Nirad Tewarie
CEO, AMCHAM T&T

WELCOME

By Nirad Tewarie

AMCHAM T&T CEO

Navigating Uncertainty

I recently had the opportunity to moderate the panel “Rhythm & Revenue: Unlocking the Potential of the Orange Economy” at AMCHAM T&T’s 4th Annual ESG Conference. It was fun! My soul lives in the Orange Economy (including sport, well, football, really).

It was an interesting conversation with some exceptionally bright, innovative, and forward-thinking speakers, whose perspectives demonstrated just how much talent, creativity, and entrepreneurial thinking exist within our creative economy. But the discussion was compelling not simply because of its potential, but because of what it represents. You see, opportunity is not always found in the places we have traditionally looked for it.

Sometimes, to use a cliché, we have to look ‘outside the box’. That, for me, is at the heart of navigating uncertainty.

We are operating in a world where change is constant. Indeed, life’s only constant, is change. Markets shift. Technology moves quickly. Consumer expectations evolve. Disruptions can come from places we did not anticipate, and the decisions businesses make today can have consequences well into the future.

But uncertainty is not only about what we stand to lose. It is also about what we might gain.

Every disruption creates a challenge. But it can also expose a weakness that needs to be addressed, create demand for something new, or force us to reconsider an approach that may have worked well in the past but is no longer fit for purpose.

The question, therefore, is not whether uncertainty exists. It does. The question is whether we are prepared to recognise, nay, create the opportunity within it.

This is where ESG becomes more than a framework or a reporting exercise.

OUR FOCUS ON ESG

At AMCHAM T&T, we are focused on ESG not because it is fashionable, but because it is fundamental to building stronger, more resilient businesses that are sustainable and therefore profitable in the long term.

Organisations that manage these issues effectively are often better positioned to manage risk, adapt to change, attract investment and create long-term value.

In an increasingly uncertain world, ESG is not a trend. It is a business imperative. But I also believe ESG can be a way of looking at opportunity. It encourages us to think beyond the immediate decision and consider what that decision means over time. It asks us to look at the risks we may be carrying, the value we may

For too long, we have measured opportunity by how closely it resembles what we already know.

be overlooking, and the opportunities that may emerge as the world around us changes. And this matters for Trinidad and Tobago.

For too long, we have measured opportunity by how closely it resembles what we already know. But if we want to build a more resilient economy, we must also be willing to recognise value in new ideas, new business models, new industries, and new ways of doing things.

The Orange Economy is one example of this. The Tech economy is another. The talent, creativity, and intellectual property that exist in Trinidad and Tobago represent economic assets. The opportunity is not simply to celebrate them, but to create the conditions for those assets to become sustainable businesses, jobs, exports and investment.

The same principle applies across the economy. We cannot know when the next major disruption will come. We cannot predict every crisis or anticipate every change in technology, markets or consumer behaviour.

But we can decide how prepared we will be when it does. That preparation is about resilience. It is about having the people, systems, relationships and leadership required to respond when circumstances change.

And resilience should not be viewed simply as the ability to recover. It is also the ability to adapt, evolve, and find a way forward. That is a responsibility we share – not only as business leaders, but as a business community.

At AMCHAM T&T, part of our role is to create the spaces where these conversations can happen. As you read this issue of **LINKAGE**, I encourage you to think about uncertainty not only as something to manage, but as something that can challenge us to think differently.

The next opportunity may not look like an opportunity at first. Sometimes, it looks like a problem.

Our job is to be ready to see what it could become. ■

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RESILIENCE BY DESIGN

Building a Caribbean Technology Company

By Kendell Sandy

Founder and Managing Director,
Simply Cloud Solutions Ltd.

Long before I learned the language of cloud infrastructure, business continuity or disaster recovery, I understood resilience. I grew up in Laventille, in a household where resources were limited and one income had to stretch across a family. There was no clear blueprint for my future. What I had was the example of sacrifice, the discipline of work and a belief that circumstances did not have to determine destiny.



That belief followed me from security posts and the Sea Lots docks into data centres, boardrooms and the leadership of Simply Cloud Solutions Ltd. Each chapter taught me about responsibility, trust and recovery when life does not go according to plan. Those lessons shaped both the entrepreneur I became and the company I wanted to build.

LESSONS BEFORE TECHNOLOGY

I attended Malick Secondary Comprehensive, but my route into technology was neither immediate nor predictable. I worked for almost five years with a local security firm, learning to be observant, punctual and accountable when others depended on me. For a few days, I also pulled fish from boats at the Sea Lots docks. That demanding work reinforced a lasting lesson: honest work has dignity, and no opportunity should be taken for granted.

I later spent about a year as a guest-house security officer. There, two people saw potential beyond the uniform I was wearing. Their support enabled me to attend the School of Accounting and Management, where I earned an Advanced Diploma in Computer Technology. Their decision changed my life's direction and taught me that ability often exists before opportunity arrives. Sometimes another person's belief becomes the bridge between potential and progress.

I also pulled fish from boats at the Sea Lots docks. That demanding work reinforced a lasting lesson: honest work has dignity.

Education did not remove every obstacle, but it gave me the tools to enter a field that fascinated me. In IT roles, I learned that when technology fails, payroll, customer access and public services can stop. Technology, I came to understand, is ultimately about people, continuity and trust.

FROM EMPLOYMENT TO ENTERPRISE

By 2019, that understanding had grown into a conviction. Caribbean organisations should not have to look only outside the region for world-class infrastructure capability. They also needed local partners who understood our operating environment, our regulatory realities and the importance of responsive relationships. That conviction became the foundation of Simply Cloud Solutions Ltd.

We did not begin with unlimited

capital, a corporate history or an established reputation. We began with a clear purpose, capabilities to develop and trust to earn. I moved constantly between studying for certifications, designing solutions, meeting clients, writing proposals and doing hands-on engineering. That taught me entrepreneurship is not a title; it is taking responsibility for results when conditions are uncertain.

BUILDING CREDIBILITY

Building a technology company in a small market rarely follows a straight line. A young Caribbean company must often demonstrate its competence repeatedly before being entrusted with major responsibilities. In a small business community, reputation travels faster than advertising. A promise may open a conversation, but only consistent delivery builds confidence.

Professional development therefore became central to our journey. I did not see earning internationally recognised certifications as decorations. Each represented a commitment to understand technology deeply enough to design it responsibly, explain it clearly and support it under pressure.

International technology partnerships expanded what we could offer, but also raised expectations. We learned to document carefully, test thoroughly,

communicate honestly and take ownership when challenges arose. Technology may be the platform, but trust is the real infrastructure on which a technology company is built.

WHY CLOUD MATTERS TO TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Cloud computing is sometimes described as placing servers somewhere else or reducing technology costs. Its value is broader. Properly designed cloud services help businesses scale, recover from disruption, protect information and give employees secure access. For government and regulated industries, regional options can also strengthen decisions about data governance, jurisdiction and continuity.



This matters in a region exposed to severe weather, infrastructure interruptions, supply-chain constraints and cyber threats. Business continuity is no longer only an IT concern; it is a leadership responsibility. The same applies to artificial intelligence. Sustainable AI adoption requires secure computing capacity, reliable data, sound governance and skilled people. The Caribbean must build that foundation, not merely consume what others create.

BUILDING MORE THAN A COMPANY

The most personal part of this journey takes me back to those who made my education possible. Their support created a responsibility to recognise potential in others. I carry that lesson into leadership by sharing knowledge, supporting professional development and giving younger people practical opportunities. A successful company should leave capable people and stronger institutions behind it.

I know what it is to have ability that has not yet been recognised. There is talent throughout communities across Trinidad and Tobago waiting for opportunity and guidance. A stronger digital economy must enable people to participate not only as technology users, but as engineers, entrepreneurs, researchers and owners.

Entrepreneurship in Trinidad and Tobago can be difficult, but our size is also an advantage: relationships are close, companies can adapt and good work has visible impact. We need continued investment in skills, collaboration between established and emerging firms, and procurement that recognises qualified local capability. Local companies should meet the standard and then receive a fair opportunity to deliver. Since 2019, Simply Cloud has grown from an idea into a Caribbean technology

company contributing to enterprise and public-sector modernisation. We have built internationally recognised expertise, forged global partnerships and helped deliver secure cloud, hyperconverged infrastructure, sovereign disaster-recovery platforms and digital workspaces where resilience is mission-critical. That progress proves that a company built in Trinidad and Tobago can meet international standards and create regional impact.

But this is a foundation, not a finish line. Our next chapter is to take that capability across the Caribbean: expanding sovereign and hybrid cloud services, strengthening disaster recovery, building the foundations for responsible AI and creating opportunities for Caribbean engineers and entrepreneurs. Our ambition is clear: world-class technology, delivered with Caribbean ownership, execution and accountability. My journey from security posts and the Sea Lots docks to data centres and cloud platforms reminds me that possibility comes before proof. Someone once saw it in me; today, our responsibility is to see and build that possibility across the region. Resilience brought us here. What we have achieved shows what Caribbean talent can do. The next chapter will not simply be about participating in the Caribbean's digital future. It will be about helping to build it. ■



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ANNOUNCING THE 2026 NATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN HSE AWARDS FINALISTS

HERE THEY ARE! ... the finalists for the 16th Annual National Excellence in HSE Awards, recognising organisations that continue to demonstrate leadership, innovation and measurable commitment to HSE excellence across Trinidad and Tobago.

The 2026 Awards attracted submissions from 24 companies across four categories. Following the judging process, 12 companies emerging as finalists in their respective categories.

Entries were assessed by a distinguished panel of HSE professionals representing a cross-section of industries.

MANUFACTURING PARTICIPATION ON THE RISE

One of the notable developments this year was the significant increase in submissions from the manufacturing sector, pointing to a stronger focus on HSE within this sector. It also reflects the importance of embedding HSE into everyday business operations rather than viewing it solely through the lens of regulatory compliance.

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TURNING AI POTENTIAL INTO PRACTICAL BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

AMCHAM T&T Hosts “AI Solutions for Senior Executives” Programme

IFor businesses, moving from interest in AI to implementation can present several challenges.

These can include stalled pilot projects, investment in low-impact use cases, the use of unvetted AI tools and limited internal capacity to develop and scale AI solutions.

To address this challenge, AMCHAM T&T hosted a programme to give senior decision-makers

a structured framework for evaluating AI opportunities before committing significant resources to implementation.

AMCHAM T&T, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Trinidad and Tobago and the Artificial Intelligence Innovation Centre (AIIC) at The University of the West Indies (UWI), launched the AI Solutions for Senior Executives: Executive AI Readiness and Blueprint Programme



on September 10 at the UN House in Chancery Lane, Port of Spain.

The four-month programme, running from September to December 2026, brought together senior executives from seven companies and was designed to help participating businesses move beyond AI experimentation and identify practical, high-value applications for artificial intelligence within their organisations.

Through the initiative, AMCHAM T&T members were gaining access to the strategic guidance of the UNDP and the technical expertise of the AIIC, supported by a structured process for assessing where AI can deliver value within their organisations.

FROM AI INTEREST TO BUSINESS VALUE

Businesses need to be equipped to understand emerging technologies and to make informed decisions about how those technologies can be applied.

Nirad Tewarie, CEO of AMCHAM T&T (photo at left), said the initiative helped members navigate technological change and identify practical ways to strengthen their businesses.

“The conversation around AI has moved quickly from curiosity to expectation, but businesses need more than an understanding of what AI can do. They need to understand where it makes business sense for them. This programme gives our members the opportunity to work with experienced partners to identify high-value applications, understand the risks and develop practical, responsible solutions that can be implemented within their organisations.”

“At AMCHAM T&T, we want our members to be active participants in the transformation that AI is bringing, and to have access to the expertise and tools they need to turn that potential into real business value,” Tewarie said.

The programme was structured to help participating organisations move systematically from identifying a business challenge to determining whether an AI-enabled solution is appropriate and feasible. Participants engaged in executive capacity building, structured discovery sessions, process analysis and AI opportunity screening. These activities culminated in the development of an AI Opportunity Blueprint for each participating organisation.

Each blueprint outlined the proposed solution, data requirements, risks, indicative effort and return on investment, as well as an implementation roadmap.

BUILDING RESPONSIBLE AI CAPACITY

The partnership also brought a development perspective to the programme, recognising that the effective adoption of technology within businesses can contribute to broader economic development.

UNDP's Ugo Blanco said the programme reflected the UNDP's commitment to using technology to advance sustainable development: "We are committed to helping countries harness new technologies to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Through this programme, we are bringing that commitment into the business community, helping senior executives identify where AI can deliver real value and be applied responsibly. We hope to see businesses turn AI potential into practical solutions that strengthen productivity, competitiveness and sustainable development."

Ravi Deonarine of the AIIC highlighted the importance of connecting business needs with technical realities. "There is a lot of interest in AI right now, but

moving from an idea to a working solution requires a clear understanding of the business problem, the available data and the technology needed to address it. At the AIIC, our role is to bring that technical perspective to the programme and help organisations determine what is actually feasible, design solutions that can be implemented, and provide a clear path from concept to deployment."

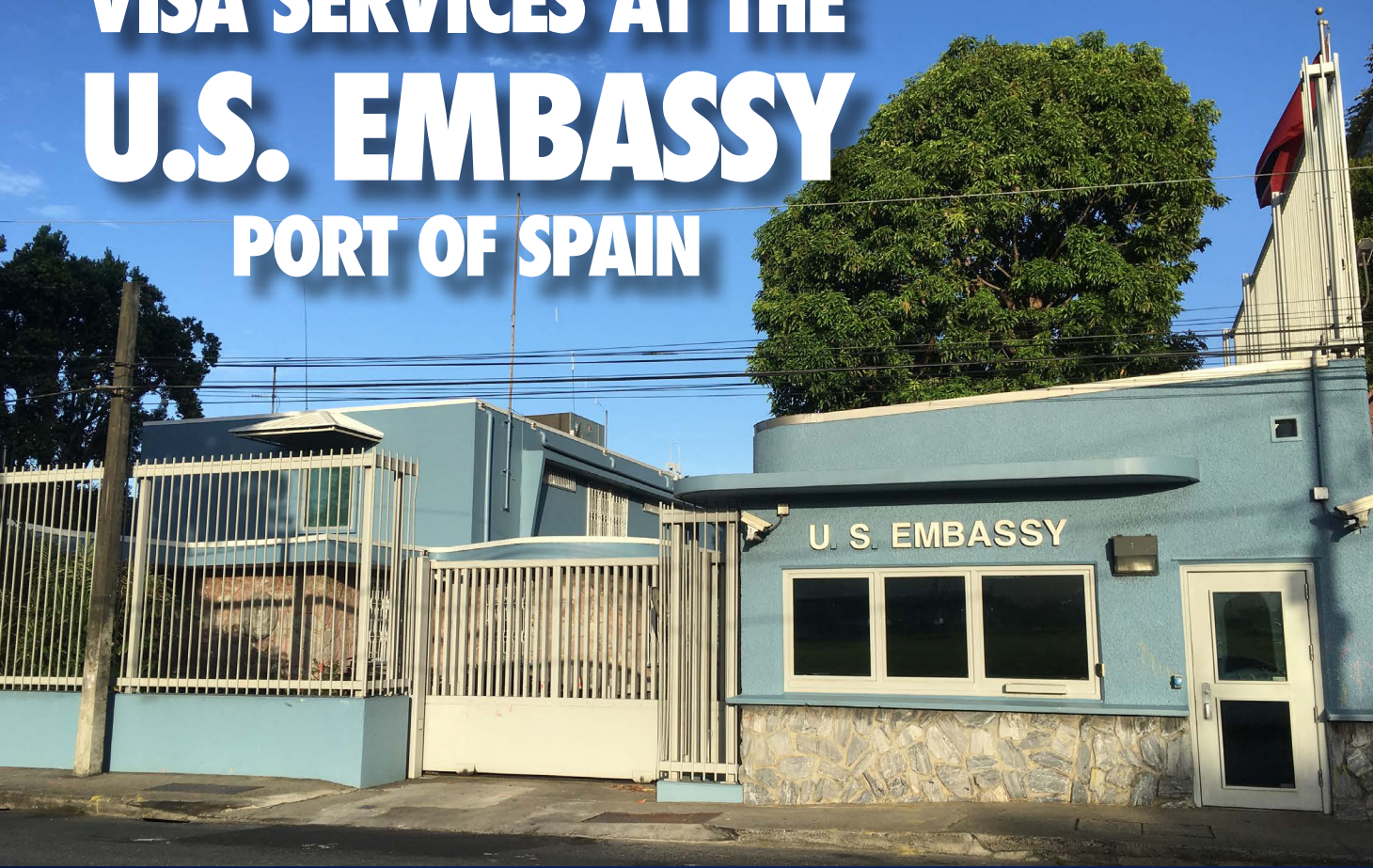
SUPPORTING TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

The AI Solutions for Senior Executives programme formed part of AMCHAM T&T's broader efforts to support digital transformation and strengthen the capacity of its members to respond to technological change.

Through initiatives such as the Tech Hub Islands Summit (T.H.I.S.) and the Executive AI Readiness and Blueprint Programme, AMCHAM T&T continues to promote technology as a driver of business growth, competitiveness and economic transformation.

The partnership with UNDP and AIIC also aims to contribute to the development of a stronger pipeline of responsible AI projects within Trinidad and Tobago's private sector. ■

VISA SERVICES AT THE U.S. EMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN



The Embassy of the United States in Port of Spain provides consular services to United States citizens residing or visiting Trinidad and Tobago, and immigrant and non-immigrant visas to residents of Trinidad and Tobago.

HOW TO GET A VISA

If you require a visa to travel to the United States, your first stop for information should be the Embassy of Port of Spain website

<https://tt.usembassy.gov>



Business and tourist travellers are generally issued the combined B1/B2 visa. This visa allows short trips for leisure, transit and to attend meetings, professional conferences seminars and conventions.

Travellers are encouraged to apply early and keep their visas current to avoid delay, particularly if they have relatives in the U.S. or visit frequently for business.

FEES

Non-immigrant visa application fees can be paid on the U.S Department of State Visa Appointment website

<https://ais.usvisa-info.com/en-tt/niv/information/fee>

and at Scotiabank branches.

DON'T USE THIRD PARTY WEBSITES

Avoid vague internet searches and the plethora of vendor websites that claim to provide visa assistance or consultations. While these sites collect personal data and accept your payment online, they cannot provide visa services. Always use the official Embassy website

<https://tt.usembassy.gov>

INTERVIEW WAIVER

The interview waiver option is available for applicants whose tourist visas are either still valid or expired less than one year ago, and who were issued when they were 18-years or older. All applications begin with online submission of the DS-160 application form and creation of an online profile to register for visa services.

An interview waiver applicant's online profile will be updated to send document status, signalling to the applicant to print the courier-in authorisation and take the required documents to TTPOST. Interview waiver applications are normally processed in 7 to 10 working days from receipt at the Embassy.

Visa applicants who do not qualify for the interview waiver will be prompted to schedule an interview and appear in person. If the travel is urgent (medical treatment, bereavement or urgent business) an expedited appointment can be requested through the online profile. The information and appointment website provides extensive information on the categories of non-immigrant visas, visa application fees, document courier services and general information on the documents required for each visa type:

<https://ais.usvisa-info.com>





INQUIRIES AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Case-specific inquiries and requests for additional support during the interview for the elderly, neuro-diverse applicants, and those requiring wheelchair access can be made using the Consular Navigator at least three days prior to the interview. Specific responses will be provided during regular business hours. The navigator is located on the Visas page of the Embassy website:

<https://tt.usembassy.gov>

USEFUL LINKS:

U.S. Embassy website:

<https://tt.usembassy.gov>

Official U.S. Department of State Visa Services website:

<https://ais.usvisa-info.com>

General Visa Information:

www.travel.state.gov

Citizenship and Immigration Services:

www.uscis.gov

Customs and Border Protection:

www.cbp.gov

If you are a citizen or national of a Visa Waiver Programme country:

<https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>

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NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY: BUILDING FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

AMCHAM T&T President Anna
Henderson on ESG, Resilience and the
future of business

For Trinidad and Tobago, the challenges of a rapidly changing business environment are unfolding alongside an important national conversation about how to build an economy capable of withstanding the shocks that will inevitably come.

This was the context in which Anna Henderson, President of AMCHAM T&T, delivered the Opening Remarks at the Chamber's 4th Annual





Anna Henderson with Natasha Ashby, Director of AMCHAM T&T and Vice President Law & Corporate Affairs at Atlantic

ESG Conference, held under the theme “Navigating Uncertainty: Sustainability, Resilience and the Future of Business,” on September 15, 2026 at the Hyatt Regency, POS.

Henderson was careful not to dwell on uncertainty. Instead, she pointed to the opportunities emerging alongside the challenges, including positive signs in the energy sector and the possibilities presented by technology and diversification.

“There is a growing recognition that the future of our economy cannot simply be about maintaining what we have. It has to be about building what comes next.”

ESG IS NOT AN EXTRA

For Henderson, one of the challenges is that when business conditions become difficult, organisations can begin to treat ESG considerations as secondary to immediate commercial pressures.

“Because when things become difficult, it is easy to view things like environmental responsibility, good governance, social impact, and employee well-being as the ‘extras’ – the things we will get to when business conditions improve.”

Her response was unequivocal: “But these are not extras. They are the foundations of good business.”

From there, Henderson positioned ESG as something much more practical than a compliance exercise. At its core, she argued, it is about asking how organisations operate responsibly, how they manage risk before it becomes a crisis, and how they create lasting value. “How do we operate responsibly? How do we manage risk before it becomes a crisis? And how do we ensure that we create value by the strength, resilience and sustainability of the businesses and communities we leave behind?”

She also pointed to the importance of integrating financially material ESG considerations into strategy, operations and risk management, while cautioning against approaches focused simply on compliance. “Companies that integrate financially material ESG factors into strategy, operations, and risk management tend, on average, to perform at least as well as—and often better than—companies that do not. Box-ticking doesn’t work. A thoughtful, purposeful ESG integration strategy that aligns with your individual business objective does work. It positively impacts the bottom line.”



Anna Henderson with The Honourable Jearlean John, Minister of Works and Infrastructure

PREPARING FOR DISRUPTION— AND WHAT FOLLOWS IT

For Henderson, this broader approach becomes particularly important as uncertainty increases. “When uncertainty increases, that big picture approach becomes more important. Because resilience is not simply about surviving disruption. It is about being prepared enough to seize the opportunity that follows it.”

Box-ticking doesn't work. A thoughtful, purposeful ESG integration strategy that aligns with your individual business objective does.

That perspective extends beyond individual businesses to the wider development of the country.

Henderson acknowledged that ambitious goals will inevitably bring difficult questions, difficult decisions and uncertainty. But she argued that the scale of those challenges should not discourage action. “Rather than allowing the scale of the challenge to weigh us down, let the scale of the ambition inspire us. Let it push us to build. To dream. To experiment. To innovate. And, most importantly, to do.”

She reinforced this with a warning against becoming paralysed by the identification of problems.

“Because transformation does not happen simply because we have identified the problems. It happens when we begin building the solutions. Too many times, we focus on the reasons why we shouldn’t do something. But in so doing, we forget the danger of doing nothing.”

FINDING BALANCE IN THE PATH FORWARD

That call for action does not mean ignoring risk.

In discussing environmental approvals and assessments, Henderson emphasised the importance of balancing efficient, predictable processes with responsible

Sustainability in practice is not about stopping development. It is about making sure that the development we pursue can stand the test of time.

development. “When we get that balance right, everyone benefits.”

“Businesses have greater certainty to invest. Communities benefit from development that is responsibly planned. And the country protects the natural assets – our land, water, coastlines and ecosystems – that support industries and livelihoods for generations.”

Her conclusion was straightforward: “That is sustainability in practice. It is not about stopping development. It is about making sure that the development we pursue can stand the test of time.”

SEEING OPPORTUNITY WHERE IT ALREADY EXISTS

Henderson also challenged conventional thinking around diversification, pointing to the potential of the Orange Economy and the value already present in Trinidad and Tobago’s people. “But sometimes, the

greatest opportunity is already here. It is in our people.”

She highlighted designers, filmmakers, musicians, software developers and creative entrepreneurs as examples of people generating intellectual property, exports, jobs and new opportunities through their work. “These are not simply creative pursuits. They are economic activity. They are intellectual property. They are exports. They are jobs. They are opportunities for young people to build careers in industries that did not exist in the same way a generation ago.”

For Henderson, this is another example of how businesses and the wider economy can respond to uncertainty—not simply by protecting what already exists, but by recognising and developing new sources of value.

BUILDING FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

Ultimately, Henderson returned to the central role ESG can play in preparing businesses and the country for an uncertain future. “Whether we are talking about how we use our land, how we govern our companies, how we manage what we consume, how we finance our future, or how we unlock the creativity of our people, these are not separate conversations. They are pieces of the same puzzle. They are about building businesses that can adapt. Building communities that

Refuse to retreat into caution and use uncertainty as a reason to become more thoughtful, innovative and resilient.

can withstand disruption. Creating opportunities that are inclusive and lasting. And developing an economy that does not simply respond to change, but is capable of creating its own opportunities within it. And ultimately, that is what I believe ESG gives us. It gives us a framework for navigating uncertainty – not by trying to predict everything that is going to happen, but by building the kind of businesses, institutions and economy that are prepared for whatever comes next.”

The challenge, then, is not simply to get through uncertain times. It is: How do we use this moment to build something better?

For Henderson, the answer begins with refusing to retreat into caution and instead using uncertainty as a reason to become more thoughtful, innovative and resilient. “People matter. The planet matters. And purpose matters. And let us never lose sight of what ESG ultimately promises – not a checklist, not another compliance exercise, but a different way of thinking about how we build businesses, how we build economies, and how we build the future.” ■

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Om Lalla

Attorney at Law
KR Lalla and Company



Moderator

Natasha Ashby

VP Law & Corporate
Affairs
Atlantic



Iain Daniels

Barrister
2 Hare Court, London



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FROM DRAINS TO DATA CENTRES

Minister John Challenges Business to
Make Sustainability Real

Sometimes, the most important sustainability conversations begin with a drain.

That was one of the striking messages from the Honourable Jearlean John, Minister of Works and Infrastructure, at AMCHAM T&T's ESG Conference.

Minister John took the conversation beyond ESG terminology and corporate theory, grounding it instead in the everyday choices, systems and behaviours that shape the resilience of businesses — and the country.

“At the heart of this theme is a very practical question or response for us as a people in Trinidad and Tobago: how do we prepare ourselves, our businesses and our country to keep moving when circumstances change?” she asked.

Her answer was built around three ideas: focus on what we can control; reframe the unknown; and build sustainable resilience.

Minister John began with an image that might have seemed unusual for an ESG conference: a blocked drain on South Quay, Port of Spain.



Anna Henderson with Jearlean John and Daniel Best.

During drain-cleaning works in August, the Ministry found plastic bottles, garbage and waste filling the drain, while the silt trap was “completely sealed” with grease. The Minister said the grease had come from businesses disposing of cooking oil and kitchen waste directly into the municipal drainage system.

The example was deliberately simple — and deliberately uncomfortable.

When flooding occurs, she noted, the instinct can be to blame the weather, the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure or climate change. But in this case, the problem was also rooted in human behaviour.

“But that drain was not sealed by climate change,” Minister John said. “In fact, that drain was sealed by human habits... human beings making the conscious decision to throw garbage and oil into the drainage system.”

For her, this illustrated a fundamental point about resilience: we cannot build it while ignoring the things within our control.

We cannot build resilience on indifference.

“We cannot build resilience on indifference,” she told the audience.

“We cannot have a serious conversation about sustainability and the future of business while treating the environment immediately outside our own door as somebody else’s responsibility.”

That responsibility, she argued, extends to businesses and individuals alike.

From deliberately building over drains and encroaching on highway reserves to ignoring required setbacks and constructing commercial infrastructure before seeking approval, Minister John challenged the audience to consider whether sustainability can really exist without accountability.

“Sustainability cannot mean following the rules only when they are convenient to you,” she said.

ESG HAS TO MEAN SOMETHING BEYOND THE BOARDROOM

Minister John also turned her attention to corporate social responsibility, drawing on another example.

She described seeing illegal vending and a skip bin overflowing with garbage near the base of the Hilton. For months, she said, the situation remained while different people could have assumed that someone else was responsible for addressing it.

“Somebody must have put it there. Somebody must have seen it. Somebody could have removed it. Somebody could have cleaned it. Somebody could have enforced a standard.”

The repetition was intentional.

“Notice how many times I said SOMEBODY,” she said. “Everybody was watching it, including the Hilton, but Nobody was taking responsibility for it.”

Her broader point was that ESG cannot become a collection of impressive words disconnected from action.

“We speak a great deal about corporate social responsibility, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) and sustainability, but corporate social responsibility should not be performative. It should be a genuine interest and commitment to do better for Trinidad and Tobago.”

For Minister John, that commitment also means investing in people.

“If we are serious about sustainability, then investing in the future- our human resources from a young age is where you put your money,” she said. “It is part of the work.”

A LESSON IN SUSTAINABILITY FROM A TOBAGO YARD

Perhaps the most personal moment of the address came when Minister John reflected on growing up in Charlotteville. She recalled being sent outside by her

My grandmother, Ma Maggie, said: “Go out there and sweep that yard so I could see my face in it.”

grandmother, Ma Maggie, on Saturday mornings with a simple instruction:

“Go out there and sweep that yard so I could see my face in it.”

It was, on the surface, a lesson about keeping a yard clean. But Minister John explained that the lesson stayed with her because it was really about responsibility, discipline and standards.

“She was teaching me that the state of the space you are responsible for is a public statement about who you are, and by extension, who we are as a people.”

Then came the connection to ESG.

“Cleanliness engenders discipline. Discipline engenders order. It is only out of order that sustainability and resilience can flow, and we can truly be competitive.”

The story also became a bridge to one of the Minister’s central arguments about global competitiveness.

Trinidad and Tobago, she said, must look beyond itself and understand the markets and economies with which it is competing. She pointed to Dubai, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Vietnam as examples of places deliberately

positioning themselves to attract investment and build competitive economies.

“The success of these countries is not based on luck. They are deliberately positioning themselves to welcome capital.”

And that positioning, she argued, requires more than ambition.

“Resilience does not come just so. Resilience comes from a people willing to accept a vision, and willing to do the work that vision requires.”

Because, as she reminded the audience once again: “WORK TAKES WORK.”



REFRAMING UNCERTAINTY AS OPPORTUNITY

The second part of Minister John's address focused on the unknown.

Global markets are changing. Geopolitical developments remain uncertain. Energy markets continue to evolve. For Trinidad and Tobago, she argued, the response cannot simply be to wait and see what happens.

Instead, the country must look at what it already has — its resources, infrastructure, expertise and assets — and consider what can be unlocked.

Minister John pointed to developments in the energy sector, including recent gas and oil agreements, as examples of opportunities that could support Trinidad and Tobago's future economic positioning.

IBIS Steel Company Launch. Among the attendees were US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau, US Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Phillip Kern, and Government Ministers The Hons. Jearlean John, Satyakama Maharaj and Davendranath Tancoo (Photo courtesy Thion Lord, MediaMill)

But she was careful to distinguish opportunity from execution.

“Reframing an opportunity is only useful if it ends in something built.”

She highlighted the recommissioning of the Ibis Steel Company of Trinidad and Tobago as an example. The project involves an initial US\$250 million investment, with a further US\$750 million planned for expansion and modernisation. The project is expected to create hundreds of jobs during refurbishment and permanent employment once production begins and expands.

The potential extends beyond steel, with vanadium and titanium also part of the output.

For Minister John, the significance lies in what happens when existing assets are connected to new opportunities.

“This Government looked at something we already had: furnaces, berths, rail, power infrastructure, industrial land and, most importantly, people with the knowledge to operate it.”

Resilience is not simply about recovering when something goes wrong.

“We have done it, but now we must expand it.”

“That is what sustainability looks like when it becomes real. It is not just keeping an asset alive. It is connecting that asset to jobs, foreign exchange, skills, supply chains and a future for communities.”

FROM OPPORTUNITY TO SYSTEMS THAT LAST

Minister John’s third theme brought the discussion back to resilience — but with an important distinction.

Resilience is not simply about recovering when something goes wrong. It is about building systems strong enough to withstand uncertainty and create confidence over the long term.

“What attracts capital is precisely what makes a country resilient: Order, Predictability, excellence, discipline, cleanliness, and standards that hold when nobody is watching.”

She argued that these fundamentals matter to investors because they signal how a country functions — from the cleanliness of its public spaces to the efficiency and predictability of its approvals and systems.

Among the developments she highlighted were proposed investments in data centres and artificial intelligence infrastructure, including frameworks with Ernst & Young and Hummingbird AI Holdings. Together, she said, these represent potential investment of more than US\$5 billion.

She also highlighted the Ministry’s Revitalisation Plan, which identifies 13 development nodes and 129 projects over a ten-year horizon, representing approximately TT\$112 billion in investment. The programme is projected to generate up to 72,000 jobs at its peak.

The scale of these initiatives, she suggested, reinforces the need for the public and private sectors to see themselves as partners in the country’s development.

Existing encroachments identified
reserve of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway.



Presentation slide showing multiple highway reserve encroachments by private businesses.

The Government has a role to play in building roads, clearing watercourses, delivering ports and advancing major infrastructure projects. But government action alone cannot create the culture required for long-term competitiveness.

“This Government cannot legislate pride. We cannot legislate discipline. We cannot legislate shame. We cannot legislate a burning ambition to be excellent, to be competitive, to just hustle!”

SWEEP OUR OWN YARD

As Minister John brought her address to a close, she returned to the story that had framed one of her most memorable points—Ma Maggie.

“Perhaps that is what Trinidad and Tobago needs from all of us now.

Government has a role to play in building roads, but government action alone cannot create the culture required for long-term competitiveness.

To sweep our own yard. To take responsibility for what is in front of us. To raise the standard. To do the work so well that, when we are finished, we can see our own faces in it.”

For a conference focused on navigating uncertainty, the message was ultimately less about predicting the future and more about preparing for it.



Presentation slide dramatising the effects of flooding in a humorous way.

Minister John challenged businesses and citizens alike to take responsibility for what is within their control, to see opportunity differently, and to turn ideas into systems that can last.

She closed with a simple formulation of what she believes should be the baseline for building a more sustainable and resilient Trinidad and Tobago:

“Capital goes where it is welcomed, opportunity goes where there is order, confidence goes where there are standards, and resilience is built where people take responsibility.”

And with that, her challenge to the room was clear: “Let the true work that matters begin.” ■

Capital goes where it is welcomed, opportunity goes where there is order, confidence goes where there are standards, and resilience is built where people take responsibility.



Environmental, Social and Governance

RESILIENCE IS A TEAM SPORT

ESG is a Tool to Share Ideas, Build Partnerships,
and Develop Practical Solutions

Daniel Best, President of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), delivered the Keynote Address at AMCHAM T&T's 4th Annual ESG Conference.

“ESG has shifted from the margins of corporate strategy to its core, driven in large part by a climate vulnerability our economies can no longer treat as abstract,” he said. He also cautioned that greater attention to ESG does not necessarily mean greater understanding or implementation.

By Daniel Best
President, Caribbean
Development Bank



Referring to regional research, he noted that while two-thirds of directors surveyed said ESG was embedded in their strategies, only 44% reported on ESG measures. Reporting is important, but it is not the end goal. “There’s no doubt that reporting matters, but the real value lies in how these considerations shape decisions about risk, investment, and the kind of business you want to build.”

UNCERTAINTY AS THE NEW OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Best argued that the Caribbean must rethink how it approaches uncertainty. “Uncertainty is no longer an occasional disruption. It is the operating environment within which Caribbean societies must now plan and prosper.”



conomic volatility, geopolitical tensions, changing trade and tariff policies, accelerating climate change and the rapid development of artificial

intelligence have direct economic consequences. Best pointed to slowing growth across CDB’s borrowing member countries, excluding Guyana, and continued fiscal pressures in highly indebted economies with limited financial buffers. But he also identified reasons for optimism, including stronger-than-expected tourism performance and progress in renewable energy.

For Trinidad and Tobago, he noted that managing a mature energy sector while

Uncertainty is no longer an occasional disruption. It is our operating environment in which we must plan and prosper.

pursuing diversification represents a version of the same challenge facing countries throughout the region.

“Nothing will eliminate uncertainty, whether a given policy or investment. But building resilience allows us to thrive despite uncertainty being present, and that cannot rest with government alone.”

Best called for stronger governmental implementation capacity so that committed financing translates into completed projects, an enabling environment where innovation can flourish, and faster digital adoption across Caribbean governments. At the same time, he highlighted the critical role of the private sector in national development. “Building resilient economies requires a private sector that is innovative, competitive, and actively engaged in national development.”

He argued that private sector organisations must do more than

advocate for business interests. They must work collaboratively with governments to identify constraints, shape policy, support implementation, invest in skills and innovation, and promote good governance.

ESG IN ACTION

Best also outlined how the CDB is integrating ESG principles into its own operations.

Following a comprehensive ESG and sustainability materiality assessment in 2024, the CDB incorporated sustainability considerations into its decision-making and developed a 10-year strategic plan. The Bank has established financing targets for climate adaptation and mitigation, while integrating environmental and social reviews into its lending operations. These measures are designed not only to safeguard against harm, but also to strengthen clients' capacity to manage risk and build resilience.

Best noted that ESG was increasingly relevant to how development institutions are assessed by investors and creditors, pointing to CDB's first sustainability bond, which raised 100 million Swiss francs in 2025 to finance areas including climate resilience, renewable energy, water management, education, food security and MSME development.

The message was clear: ESG can influence access to capital, investor confidence and the ability of institutions to deliver long-term development impact.

COLLABORATION AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Among the strongest themes of Best's address was the importance of collaboration. The challenges facing Caribbean countries do not stop at national borders, and neither should the solutions. "No Caribbean country can build resilience alone, but together, we can achieve a scale and impact that none of us can achieve individually," he said.

Best offered a series of possibilities for what greater regional cooperation could achieve, including digital systems that allow businesses to scale across borders, stronger regional food security and a more integrated energy mix that could reduce exposure to volatility.

In this context, he pointed to the role organisations such as AMCHAM T&T can play in bringing business leaders, policymakers and development partners together.

"Share ideas, build partnerships, and develop practical solutions to share challenges. Ultimately, resilience is a team sport, and ESG is one of the most powerful tools we have to build that resilience," he said. ■



Environmental, Social and Governance

CLOSING THE GAP

Building the Infrastructure for
Impactful, Long-Term Growth

A business's environmental and social impact is created through everyday commercial and operational decisions. Yet the wider consequences of those decisions may be distant, distributed across a supply chain or simply invisible to the person making them.



By Alex Smith
CEO, FuturePlus

The person selecting a supplier may have little visibility of the conditions in which a product was made. A team replacing equipment may work to a brief focused on cost, reliability, and operational continuity, with energy use considered separately or not at all.

Once waste leaves a site, responsibility for what happens to it can appear to leave with it.

The practical purpose of sustainability management is to make these consequences visible when decisions are made. That requires the right information to reach the people with the responsibility and authority to act. Sustainability then becomes part of how the business operates, rather than an assessment carried out afterwards.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

FuturePlus holds five years of verified data from 283 global companies, providing a view across Climate, Environment, Social, Economic and Diversity and Inclusion. It records and scores what organisations can demonstrate they are doing, rather than relying on stated policies or commitments.

We score or “rate” businesses based on evidenced performance in each area. As at September 2026, the average verified scores were Economic 64 out of 100, Social 60, Diversity and Inclusion 54, Environment 40 and Climate 38. The Economic theme





In an economy shaped by energy production and major industrial infrastructure. Environmental performance is tied to long-lived assets.

considers how corporate ethics, purpose, risk, transparency, responsible innovation, workforce rights and wider stakeholder interests inform economic decision-making.

Our experience with the companies behind the data suggests that the differences in scoring across the themes are partly explained by the level of control organisations have and the practical demands of delivery. Changes to policies and internal processes can often be assigned and implemented relatively quickly. Environmental and climate improvements are more likely to require operational data, investment, technical expertise or cooperation from third parties.

Additional targets or reporting requirements will have limited effect

where a business lacks the resources or authority to deliver them.

Understanding who controls an action, what it depends on, and what support or investment it requires provides a better basis for improvement.

WHERE DELIVERY BECOMES DIFFICULT

This is particularly relevant in an economy shaped by energy production and major industrial infrastructure. Environmental performance is tied to long-lived assets, engineering requirements, maintenance schedules, energy security and significant investment. The effects extend beyond the organisation to workers, suppliers, communities and the wider economy.

Targets must connect to asset management plans, procurement cycles, and capital allocation. The people setting them may not control the equipment, contracts or budgets needed to deliver them.

Smaller businesses face a related problem within larger supply chains. They may be required to provide emissions data or meet new environmental and social standards without the systems, expertise or commercial influence available to the organisations requesting them. Proportionate requirements, consistent data requests and practical support are more likely to improve performance.

TRADE-OFFS NEED TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Sustainability decisions rarely produce benefits in every area. More often, they involve trade-offs that need to be understood and managed. A local supplier may support employment and retain economic value within the country but lack the reporting systems of a larger international business. Replacing industrial equipment may reduce energy use and operating emissions but require significant capital and create impacts through its manufacture and disposal. A change intended to improve efficiency may increase pressure on employees or make it harder for smaller suppliers to compete.

Sustainability decisions rarely produce benefits in every area. More often, they involve trade-offs.

These trade-offs need to be examined properly. Decision-makers need enough information to understand who and what may be affected, where the most material impacts occur and whether an improvement in one area could create a problem elsewhere.

SUSTAINABILITY AS BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE

Effective sustainability management begins with a clear view of the organisation's current position. This includes what it is already doing, what evidence supports it, where information is missing, and which impacts are most significant in the context of its activities.

From there, priorities should be determined by more than data availability or the relative ease of completing an action. Materiality, operational risk, regulatory change, cost, stakeholder expectations and the organisation's ability to influence the outcome all need to be considered. In an energy or infrastructure business, the most important opportunity may

be linked to an asset or maintenance programme. In a professional services firm, it may sit within employment, procurement or client work.

Sustainability should be used as a lens through which business strategy is developed and tested, helping leaders consider the environmental, social and economic consequences of decisions about growth, investment and operations. This brings

potential impacts, dependencies and trade-offs into view before decisions are made.

Responsibility must also be clear. Each action needs an owner, a timeframe and an agreed route to delivery. Some changes can be made immediately. Others will need to be incorporated into capital plans, contract renewals, procurement decisions, or equipment replacement cycles.

Where progress depends on a supplier, customer, public body or infrastructure provider, that dependency needs to be recorded and managed.

This is how sustainability moves from a separate reporting activity into normal business management. It becomes part of how investment is assessed, suppliers

are selected, risks are reviewed, and performance is monitored.

WHAT SMALLER BUSINESSES NEED IN ORDER TO ACT

A large volume of ESG guidance, standards, and reporting requirements already exists. More information will not necessarily improve delivery if businesses lack the time, expertise or resources to apply it.

Smaller businesses often first encounter sustainability through a request from a customer, investor or procurement team. That request can encourage action, but it can also create an administrative burden.

Different customers may ask similar questions in different formats, use inconsistent definitions or require data that the supplier has never collected before.

Large organisations therefore have a role beyond requesting information. They can set clearer expectations, use consistent measures, allow reasonable time for improvement, and help suppliers build the capacity to respond. Procurement is more likely to drive better performance when it recognises the operating realities



of businesses within the supply chain. In our experience, the most effective support combines a proportionate assessment of the business's current position with a prioritised roadmap, access to relevant expertise and a consistent way to collect and verify evidence. Technology can make the process manageable, but businesses also need help interpreting what the information means and deciding what to address first.

They also need to track performance over time. Meaningful benchmarks can show how a business compares with similar organisations, while clear ownership and regular review prevent identified actions from being buried under more immediate operational pressures. This gives smaller businesses a practical way to improve while building the evidence that customers, investors and procurement teams increasingly expect.

BETTER EVIDENCE, BETTER DECISIONS

Evidence is useful when it informs what a business does next. A meaningful record should capture the action taken, the reason it was prioritised, the expected result and what happened in practice. This helps management understand whether delay is caused by a genuine operational constraint or by a lack of attention, and where further investment would be worthwhile.

This is particularly relevant for Trinidad and Tobago, where decisions about energy, infrastructure and economic development affect businesses, workers, communities and the environment. Responsibility is often shared across companies, public bodies, investors and supply chains. Reliable information helps each organisation understand where it has influence and where it needs to cooperate.

A strong sustainability programme brings environmental and social impact into everyday business decisions, alongside cost, risk and return. Its value is visible in the quality of the decisions that follow. ■

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Environmental, Social and Governance

ESG AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Cost of Solving the Wrong Problem

THE PRESSURE TO ACT CAN MAKE ANY ACTIVITY FEEL LIKE PROGRESS.



A company sees rising employee turnover and launches a wellness programme.



A community objects to a proposed development, and the response is a stronger communications campaign.



A supply-chain disruption leads to a search for another supplier.



An environmental concern produces a visible green initiative.

Each response may be entirely reasonable yet, the more important question is whether the response addresses what is actually driving what we see.

That question matters increasingly in the context of ESG and sustainability.



By Giselle Hudson
Founder of The Hudson
Alignment Studio

Organisations are being asked to pay closer attention to the environmental and social consequences of how they operate, the quality of their governance, the resilience of their business models and the risks that may affect their long-term prospects. Yet the more pressure there is to demonstrate

action, the greater the temptation to move quickly from concern to solution.

There is an important stage between the two: understanding.

That need to understand before acting is reflected in current sustainability standards, which require organisations to identify and assess the sustainability-related risks and opportunities relevant to their own circumstances. There is no single list of ESG actions that every organisation can simply adopt. What looks like the same problem on the surface can have very different causes from one organisation to another.



Consider employee turnover. This could be driven by compensation, poor supervision, workload, inflexible work arrangements,

limited opportunities for advancement, a toxic team dynamic or a labour market in which particular skills are scarce. A wellness programme may be useful, but if the real issue is management behaviour or pay, it will not solve the problem. The organisation may spend money, communicate the initiative enthusiastically and still watch the same people leave.

The same is true of community resistance. Leaders may interpret opposition to a project as a failure of communication and decide that stakeholders need more information.

A wellness programme may be useful, but if the real issue for high employee turnover is management behaviour or pay, it will not solve the problem.

Sometimes the community understands the proposal perfectly well and objects to its likely impact. In that case, better communication will not resolve the underlying concern.

For ESG and sustainability, that makes decision quality especially important.

RECOGNISE THE PROBLEM

Before leaders ask, “What should we do?”, they need sufficient clarity about what they are dealing with.

1. What do we know?
2. What are we assuming?
3. What are we treating as fact just because it has been repeated often?
4. Whose perspective is missing?
5. What evidence contradicts our preferred explanation?
6. Which effects are causes, and which are symptoms?

The visible issue may sit in one part of ESG while its causes sit somewhere else. That is why diagnosis matters before resources, reputation and momentum become committed.

7. What constraints are shaping the situation?
8. What happens elsewhere in the system if we intervene here?

These questions do not delay action for the sake of analysis...they improve the basis on which action is chosen.

GETTING THIS WRONG CAN BE COSTLY

There is the obvious financial cost of an initiative that does not work, but also the time, attention and organisational energy consumed while the actual problem remains unresolved. In some cases, the organisation continues to invest in the original solution simply because so much has already been committed to it.

Understanding the situation accurately matters, especially in ESG and sustainability because many of the issues involved are interconnected.

A decision intended to solve an environmental problem may create social consequences. A procurement decision made primarily on cost can introduce

labour, supply-chain or reputational risk. A policy intended to strengthen governance can become another layer of procedure if the behaviour that created the problem is never examined.

The Volkswagen emissions scandal is a useful example. What appeared as an environmental failure also exposed governance failures around compliance, oversight and accountability. This example shows how poor decision-making can ultimately surface as an ESG failure.



urrent sustainability standards increasingly recognise this connectedness. IFRS describes sustainability-related risks and

opportunities, as arising from the relationships between a company and its stakeholders, society, the economy and the natural environment across its value chain. That framing asks leaders to look beyond isolated initiatives and consider how the business depends on, affects and interacts with the wider system in which it operates.

BEST PRACTICE IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR UNDERSTANDING

There is value in learning from what other organisations have done. Benchmarking can reveal possibilities and reduce unnecessary experimentation. But another company's solution is the product of another company's circumstances. Its workforce, operating model, geography, risk exposure, stakeholder relationships, resources and constraints may be very different.

Copying the solution without understanding the conditions that made it appropriate can create a polished answer to the wrong question.

The same applies to ESG trends. A topic can become prominent enough that organisations feel they should be doing something about it simply because their peers are. The pressure to demonstrate progress can subtly reverse the decision process: the initiative appears first and the problem it is supposed to solve is identified afterwards. That is an expensive way to strategise.

Materiality offers a useful discipline here... Not every ESG issue has the same significance for every business, and not every visible concern requires the same response. The task is to determine what matters in the organisation's particular circumstances before deciding what to do about it.

The challenge for leaders is to distinguish evidence from assumption, symptoms from causes, and urgency from pressure.

The challenge for leaders is to know enough about the situation to distinguish evidence from assumption, symptoms from causes, and urgency from pressure.

Decisions will always contain uncertainty, and better decisions will depend on having enough understanding to know what deserves attention and why.

THE GOVERNANCE DIMENSION TO CONSIDER

Good governance is often discussed in terms of structures, policies, oversight and accountability. Governance is also expressed in the quality of the questions leaders permit themselves to ask before committing resources. A board or executive team that challenges its own assumptions, seeks perspectives that complicate the preferred explanation and asks what would have to be true for a proposed solution to work is strengthening the quality of the decision before it is made. That is especially important when an organisation sincerely wants to do the right thing.

Good intentions can create their own blind spot. When an initiative is framed as environmentally responsible, socially beneficial or ethically desirable, questioning it can feel like resistance to the goal itself. Responsible leadership requires separating the desirability of the goal from the quality of the proposed response.

An initiative can be well intentioned and still be poorly diagnosed. For businesses trying to translate ESG and sustainability commitments into meaningful action, the question may therefore need to move one step upstream. Before asking, “What is the solution?”, ask, “What exactly are we solving?”

That question will not produce a sustainability strategy by itself. It can, however, prevent an organisation from spending valuable time, energy and money on a response that does not address what is actually driving the issue.

In an environment where businesses are expected to act responsibly, demonstrate resilience and create long-term value, speed matters...action matters...but so does the discipline to understand what actually needs to be solved, before committing to the fix. ■

Giselle Hudson is the founder of The Hudson Alignment Studio. Known as The Pre-Fixer™, she helps leaders get clarity before the fix by understanding what is really driving a challenge before they commit to a solution.



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Environmental, Social and Governance

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACE

Why T&T Companies Should Care About Climate Empowerment



he Private Sector has positioned itself as an agent of governance globally.

Companies, regardless of operation, are required to

include climate considerations in their daily operations. Investors want to see lower-risk portfolios, insurers want resilience, and the rise in public awareness around climate change is leading to consumers wanting to see a company's transparent climate story before buying in or supporting.

Many companies are responding to this by employing international ESG frameworks, designed for countries in Europe or in North America. However, there is a United Nations framework that not only acts as a precursor but also augments the solution more precisely than generic ESG language – **Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE)**.

By Reyad Mohammed
Caribbean Climate
Change and Sustainability
Professional



WHAT ACE ACTUALLY MEANS

ACE is a framework under Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (an international treaty which aims to address climate change) and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement (an international agreement that aims to lower emissions and further temperature increases). It breaks climate engagement into six pillars: **Education, Training, Public Awareness, Public Participation, Public Access to Information and International Cooperation.**



he underlying logic is simple: Societies cannot manage a problem their people don't understand and they cannot sustain climate action if

people are not involved.

Governments were the primary interface for ACE, but ACE had been ongoing before the term was coined. With civil society championing much of this, it's important that more than just a subset of private sector companies also understand how seamlessly it integrates into their operations. For instance, how a company trains staff, engages with communities and reports transparently. ACE should therefore not be treated in isolation but rather viewed as evolved and cross-cutting actions that promote climate engagement through the six pillars.

WHY DOES ACE MATTER TO A TRINIDAD & TOBAGO BALANCE SHEET JUST AS MUCH AS A POLICY PAPER?

Climate engagement is already being treated as a core strategy and not just an add-on. The UN Global Compact aims to help local businesses align with global corporate sustainability standards, and the Caribbean Network has 20 participants from Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) demonstrating their public commitment to sustainability which overlaps with the ACE pillars. Formalising a climate approach is no longer a strategy companies are weighing; it's a trend and a constant game of catch-up to peer companies and groups that have already started.

National policy provides the scaffolding that companies eventually build on. T&T's commitment to international frameworks like the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, coupled with local policies such as the National Climate Change Policy (2025) and the National Environmental Policy (2018), commits the country to a low-carbon transition. This is meant to be supplemented by the government's Public Sector Investment Programme, which contains a "Green Transition Portfolio." However, the Green Economy Tracker notes that the country's overall approach to



addressing this house-on-fire is still fragmented and there could be more stringent enforcement on high-emissions industries.



Overconsumption contributes to many of the environmental problems we face today.

The costs are measured in dollars, but the effects are measured in lost lives and livelihoods. We interact with private-sector entities far more often than with any other sector.

Buying from specific places shapes our thoughts through identity signalling, which makes us adopt the values of the brands we support to match how we see ourselves. Adopting a sense of climate urgency, concern, or action fills an information gap through disclosure, which gives consumers the ability to make sustainable choices. Regionally, a Caribbean consumer study covering Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Jamaica, and Dominica found that local consumers are actively weighing food-system and sustainability factors in their choices. This isn't a purely northern-market phenomenon; it underscores the importance of "public access to information."

Country targets are not just obligations but commercial openings. T&T's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) commits to a 15% cut in emissions from power generation, transport and

industry by 2030. Meeting that means real investment in mitigative climate action, which requires relevant skills, technology, financing and services - all of which can be supplied by the private sector. Embedding ACE into a workforce establishes a staff that can justly transition rather than one that has to build from zero once the shift accelerates.

ACE enables companies to make justified climate claims, something that generic ESG language cannot. Saying a company "supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" is vague. Saying it runs climate training for staff (ACE's training pillar), publishes clear data on its own emissions and mitigation actions (public access to information), or has a structured way for communities and workers to feed into its environmental decisions (public participation) gives stakeholders

Incorporating ACE doesn't mean all pillars must be implemented, especially from scratch. Reinventing the wheel wastes effort when avenues for sponsorship and partnership are practical entry points.

something concrete to evaluate, especially if its claims are questioned.

WHERE SPONSORSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP FILL THE IMPLEMENTATION GAP

Incorporating ACE doesn't mean all pillars must be implemented, especially from scratch. Reinventing the wheel wastes effort when avenues for sponsorship and partnership are practical entry points.

Focusing on sponsoring specific pillars demonstrates intent. Instead of making arbitrary financial contributions to a general climate cause, companies can focus their support on a defined element of an initiative. For instance, a company could choose to fund climate-related training workshops or public awareness campaigns. Partnering with an NGO, school or community group ensures contributions are directed towards initiatives that are immediately connected to communities. This strategically provides a clear, specific, tangible output that enhances business credibility and accountability.

Partner rather than build in-house. For businesses without the budget for a stand-alone sustainability department, partnering with an established civil society or academic ACE initiative is a far cheaper way to generate legitimate, verifiable climate engagement than building a programme internally.

ACE translates directly into operational practice for businesses through training, transparent communication.

Support the green-skills pipeline. There are local academic institutions and skill centres already training people in renewable energy mechanics and related work. Sponsorship aimed at ACE-aligned training programmes is an investment in early workforce development. This isn't just donating, it's building the capacity of the labour pool it will eventually hire.

IN ESSENCE...

ACE translates directly into operational practice for businesses through training, transparent communication, disclosure of information and creating space for participation. For companies trying to keep up with the status quo, incorporating ACE is a good start to any climate strategy, either through implementation or sponsorship of local initiatives. It's a low-risk way of establishing proof of climate engagement, while developing or supporting the same thinking and skills businesses will eventually need to draw from. ■



30th Annual

HSSE CONFERENCE

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PANEL TOPIC

IS PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY JUST A NEW BUZZ WORD OR
A HIDDEN MENTAL HEALTH EXPOSURE? HOW DO WE MEASURE IT?

3:05PM - 4:30PM

PANELISTS



Justice Frank Seepersad

Judge
Supreme Court of
Trinidad & Tobago



Dr. Nicole King-Daniel

Director - Human Resources
Proman Limited



Prof. Gerard Hutchinson

Professor, Clinical
Medical Sciences
The University of the
West Indies



Dr. Tyrone Kalpee

HSSE and Business
Transformation Consultant



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SOCIAL IMPACT

Inclusion is a design decision, not an afterthought

In 2026 we introduced live Sign Language interpretation for the full performance delivered by the Trinidad and Tobago Association for the Hearing Impaired. This has not been done at Welcome to Freetown before.

One survey respondent called it priceless. Three of the eighteen surveyed named it unprompted as the thing that most clearly signified the band stands for.

Alongside it: twelve artisan stalls and six food vendors, eighteen small businesses trading in a room of fifteen hundred people.



UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF THE ORANGE ECONOMY

Culture, Sustainability
and the Business of
Creativity

Muhammad Muwakil
Band Leader, Freetown Collective



F

rom *Good Swimma* and *Feel The Love* to *World on Fire*, *Mas* and *Take Me Home*, the musical band Freetown Collective has built a catalogue that has resonated well beyond Trinidad and Tobago.

Their music has travelled internationally, with *Good Swimma* reimagined by Major Lazer and Showtek as *Believer*, while *Feel The Love*, a collaboration with DJ Private Ryan, became a major local hit. More recently, *Take Me Home* has further connected with audiences across the Caribbean and diaspora. The group has also taken its music to international

stages, including London, Canada, Japan and the legendary Glastonbury Festival.

That level of recognition did not happen overnight. Behind the music is a business that has evolved considerably from the early days when Freetown Collective's members were simply artists receiving payments and dividing them between themselves.

At AMCHAM T&T's ESG Conference, Muhammad Muwakil, Lead Vocal of Freetown Collective, offered an insight into that evolution – and into a side of the group's work that audiences may not always see.

Speaking during the panel session "Rhythm & Revenue: Unlocking the Potential of the Orange Economy," Muwakil presented "*Welcome to Freetown Collective: Sustainability Report 2026*," taking the audience behind the scenes of the group's flagship carnival event,

Freetown Collective performing at the ESG Conference.



Welcome to Freetown, and its efforts to build sustainability into the event's operations.

MORE THAN MUSIC

For Muwakil, the starting point is a belief that creativity should not be confined to entertainment. "Everything we do has to be about more than just music."

Music can be a vehicle for many things, but reducing artists to their music alone limits the value of their creativity

and imagination. "There's a kind of a myopia that sets in, not only with the artist, but also with the corporate sponsor."

Artists should be recognised for their ability to approach problems differently – a capability that remains underutilised in Trinidad and Tobago, the wider Caribbean and internationally. "When I look at something to solve a problem, it's not going to be what other people see. That's one of the largest resources we are not tapping into in Trinidad, Tobago."

It is this broader understanding of creativity that provides the context for Freetown Collective's sustainability work.

CULTURE: AN UNDERDEVELOPED EXPORT

Muwakil places Freetown Collective's work within a broader conversation

about the value of culture. "Culture is one of our region's oldest yet most underdeveloped exports."

Part of the challenge is that Caribbean culture is so deeply embedded in everyday life that its economic value can be easy to overlook. Art like a family recipe – something so common that its potential value may not be recognised.

"We always had pan, we always had calypso, we always had soca. Everybody's uncle sings parang, everybody's uncle is an artist, everybody's auntie does this or that. And so there's no value to it, to most of us."

Yet the very things that Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean have historically taken for granted can carry the region's identity far beyond its borders. "It carries our names further than anything we drill or refine," Muwakil said.

For him, culture is not simply an economic product. It is also part of what protects a nation's identity in an increasingly globalised world. "Culture is the defender. Culture is the cell wall around any nation."

TURNING SUSTAINABILITY INTO SOMETHING MEASURABLE

That philosophy of looking beyond the obvious also shaped Freetown Collective's approach to *Welcome to Freetown*. The group set out to make the event



A trendsetting band that has incorporated ESG reporting into their work.

sustainable across multiple dimensions, but the objective was not simply to make claims about sustainability.

“We wanted to map it out to become more credible. Claiming something without a number, that’s just marketing.”

For Freetown Collective, measurement became a way to establish credibility with partners and sponsors while identifying areas where the event could improve.

“What gets measured gets improved. If you can’t measure it, how are you going to improve it?”

The band’s *2026 Sustainability Report* relies on independent measurement rather than simply reporting the organisers’ own figures. Here are some excerpts:

The event had **17 recycling bins**, with material separation, post-event sorting and weighing conducted at the recycling

facility. In 2026, **355 pounds of recyclable and organic material were diverted from the landfill**, compared with 249 pounds in 2025 – a **43 per cent increase**. The event also recovered **234 pounds of glass** and achieved **100 per cent vendor compliance**.

One of the lessons from *Welcome to Freetown* was that sustainability systems do not necessarily work simply because the infrastructure is there.

Food vendors were prohibited from giving out single-use plastic cutlery. “No plastic in the event.” To improve food-waste recovery, for example, paid personnel had to be stationed at bins to guide patrons on where different materials should go. “We’re not leaving it to chance. We want something to happen. We’re making it happen.”

The approach demonstrates an important lesson for businesses considering sustainability initiatives: policies and targets are only as effective as the systems and people put in place to deliver them.

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH INCLUSION

The sustainability strategy extended beyond waste management.

Freetown Collective also considered how an event could reduce barriers to participation and create a stronger sense of community.

One example was shared transportation, which encouraged people attending alone to connect with others travelling to the event.

We're trying to encourage in our community to decrease its carbon footprint and increase its community footprint."

The group also made accessibility a deliberate part of the event's design.

"Inclusion is a design decision, not an afterthought."

Accessibility measures included facilitating entry for wheelchair users and introducing live sign language at the event.

When someone who is differently abled is able to come into an event, it acclimatises the rest of people at the event to be a little more helpful.

For Freetown Collective, the value of inclusion extends beyond the person whose immediate needs are being addressed, but also influences the behaviour of everyone around them.

"When someone who is differently abled is able to come into an event, it now acclimatises the rest of people at the event to be a bit different, to be a little more helpful."

BEING HONEST ABOUT THE GAPS

Perhaps the strongest feature of Freetown Collective's sustainability approach is its willingness to acknowledge what did not work.

Although the event mandated compostable packaging, only five pounds of food was ultimately composted. The problem was not simply the packaging; the necessary segregation infrastructure was not in place, meaning much of the

compostable material ended up mixed with general waste and went to the landfill.

Muwakil was equally candid about areas where the organisation still lacked sufficient data, including fuel volume, venue energy use, patron transportation and food and beverage volumes.

That transparency is significant. Rather than creating a sustainability narrative built only around achievements, the band's report identifies limitations in its current systems and, in doing so, creates a basis for improvement.

MAKING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR SUSTAINABLE CREATIVITY

Muwakil also addressed a fundamental challenge facing sustainability within the creative industries: the need to make responsible practices commercially meaningful.

He acknowledged that the event industry does not always view sustainability measures as a priority. "We are operating in a framework that does not care about this at all. As far as promoters are concerned, this is a waste of time."

But he argued that this can change when businesses and creatives demonstrate that sustainable practices can become part of a successful business model.

"Until such people begin to attract sponsorship because they are doing it."

For Freetown Collective, this is where the conversation with corporate partners becomes particularly important. The group is not positioning itself simply as an entertainment act seeking sponsorship. Instead, it wants to demonstrate how its creative capabilities, audience, event platform, and sustainability practices can create value for partners. "You have to make it attractive if it really means something to you." And, importantly, the band believes other event organisers should not have to start from scratch.

The group's approach is also being developed as an internal capability rather than something dependent entirely on outside

consultants. "Our capability is owned in-house, so every time we move, we don't need to bring in somebody else to do it."

That matters because *Welcome to Freetown* is not limited to Trinidad and Tobago. The event has expanded to other markets, including London, Canada and the United States. "Anywhere this event goes, it will be sustainable because we can make it so, and we're not reliant on someone else to do that."

The sustainability work becomes part of the band's intellectual and operational capital – something the organisation can carry with it as it grows internationally.

MEASURING THE NIGHT THEY LOVE

Freetown Collective's Sustainability Report ultimately reflects an attempt to rethink what a creative business can be – and what culture can contribute to the economy when it is treated not simply as entertainment, but as intellectual, social and commercial value.

The group's message is not that it has solved sustainability. Instead, it is that the work must begin with measurement, honesty, and a willingness to improve.

Muwakil summed up that commitment simply: "We commit to measure the night we love and tell the truth about it. Join us as we grow."

For an organisation whose work has already carried Trinidad and Tobago's culture to audiences around the world, the next chapter may be about proving just how much further creativity can travel when it is paired with responsible business practices, measurable impact, and a willingness to challenge conventional thinking. ■



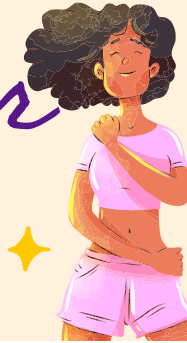
WILMP!



AMCHAM T&T and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) marked the successful completion of the 8th Annual Women in Leadership Mentorship Programme 2025-2026 (WILMP) with a Closing Ceremony in July.

The 2025-2026 programme brought together 81 mentees and 67 mentors, creating a community of female leaders and professionals committed to learning, sharing experiences, and building meaningful connections. ■

A Letter to My Younger Self



At the Closing Ceremony of the AMCHAM T&T & IDB 8th Annual Women in Leadership Mentorship programme 2025–2026 in July, participants celebrated another successful year of mentorship, leadership development and professional growth.

Feature speaker Simone Martin-Šulgan offered a powerful and deeply personal reflection in the form of a letter to her younger self.

Read Simone's inspiring message:

Dear 21-year-old Simone,

I want you to picture something. Picture the version of you sitting at that desk at Brieves Road where you felt like the smallest person in the room. Shoulders a little tight. Smile a little too eager. Rehearsing sentences before you say them, in case one of them makes you sound like you don't belong. I've been carrying her with me for years. And tonight, I want to write to her, because everything I'm about to say to you, I'm really saying to her.

By Simone Martin-Šulgan
Vice President & General
Manager of Flow Trinidad &
Tobago | Liberty Caribbean



The world does not need a more agreeable version of you. It needs the actual one.

So here it is. The letter I wish someone had put into my hands when I was starting out.

The first thing I want you to know is that ***you are already enough***. Not the polished version. Not the future version. Not the one who finally has the title, or the credentials, or the perfect answer. This one. The one still figuring it out. She's the one who's going to do the work. ✨

You are going to spend a long time trying to become someone you think the room wants. You'll soften your voice. You'll edit your laugh. You'll wear the clothes that feel like a costume and speak in a manner that isn't quite yours. And every single time you do it, a small part of you will go quiet.

Please, bring her back. The world does not need a more agreeable version of you. It needs the actual one. Your authenticity is not a liability to manage; it is the ***single most valuable thing you'll ever bring to a table.***

You are going to fail. I want to say that plainly, because no one said it plainly to me. You will pitch things that don't land. You will lead projects that don't work. You will be passed over for that Marketing Manager role, the Commercial Director promotion you were sure had your name on it. And each of those moments is going to feel, in the exact instant it happens, like proof of something terrible about you.

It isn't. It's the tuition, the price every leader you admire has paid it. The difference between the ones who make it and the ones who don't is not talent, it's whether they let the failure define them or refine them. ***Let it refine you.*** Then keep going.

There is going to be a few years where it feels like every door closes at once.

Criticism is going to be harder than failure. Failure is private in a way that criticism isn't. Criticism is someone looking straight at you and telling you where you fell short — and your instinct will be to defend, to explain, to make the discomfort go away.

Don't. Sit in it. **Let it be uncomfortable.** The most important growth of your career will happen in the ninety seconds after someone tells you something you didn't want to hear, when you resist the urge to justify and instead just... listen. Not all feedback is right. But you cannot sort the useful from the noise until you stop flinching long enough to actually hear it.

And while we're on this,... please, please stop pretending you have all the answers. I know why you do it. You think that admitting uncertainty in a room full of confident people will cost you your seat at the table. It won't. **The people who earn deep, durable trust are not the ones who perform certainty.** They are the ones who can say, in a boardroom full of executives, "I don't know yet — but here is how I'm going to find out." That sentence is not weakness. That sentence is leadership. Learn to say it before you feel ready to.

There is going to be a few years where it feels like every door closes at once. The job you wanted, the recognition you expected, the path you assumed was yours. I need you to hear me on this: **rejection is redirection.** I know how hollow that sounds when you're inside it. But every no you receive in the next twenty years is going to steer you, sometimes gently, sometimes brutally, toward the thing you were actually built for. The version of your career you can see from where you're standing is smaller than the one waiting for you. **Trust the redirection, even when it looks and feels like loss.**

Perfection is a very expensive type of procrastination.

You are going to be told, in ways subtle and unsubtle, that ***you are too emotional***. Especially as a woman in these rooms. And you are going to start treating your feelings as something to hide, like a stain you keep covering with your hand.

Do not do that. Your feelings are not a bug in your operating system. ***They are the operating system***. When something makes you angry, ask what value of yours it just violated. When something makes you uneasy, ask what your instincts are trying to tell you before your logic catches up. When something makes you cry, ask what it means that this,... this specific thing, got past all your defenses. ***Emotion is a barometer***. It is telling you what you care about and what you are worth. ***Read it. Don't silence it.***

Stop waiting to be ready. You are going to talk yourself out of so many rooms because you're waiting until you feel qualified, until the plan is airtight, until you have the perfect answer for every possible question. Perfection is a very expensive type of procrastination. ***Take the risk before you feel ready***. The confidence doesn't come first and then the leap... it's the leap, and then the confidence, and honestly sometimes not even then.

Find your tribe. Not a network. Not a list of contacts. A tribe. A handful of people; mentors, peers, one or two very honest friends, ***who will tell you the truth when your reflection is lying to you***. Who will celebrate a win with you without measuring it against their own. Who will pick up the phone at 10pm when that Ops review has flattened you, and remind you who you are. Build that circle carefully. Tend to it. It is, without exaggeration, the most important infrastructure of your career.

Do the thing that makes you happy.

Say the unpopular thing. When you are the only person in the room seeing what you're seeing, the risk no one else is naming, the assumption no one else is questioning, the person no one else is defending say it. Yes, it will cost you sometimes. It will make some meetings harder and some rooms colder. But a leader who only says what is easy is not a leader. She is a mirror. ***Be the voice, not the reflection.***

Give yourself grace. You are going to be so much harder on yourself than you'd ever be on the women you mentor. You'll extend patience, kindness, and a hundred second chances to the people around you, and none of it to the woman in your own mirror. Please turn some of that back on her. She's doing better than you're letting her know.

And finally, the most important thing I can tell you, and the thing it will take me the longest to learn.

The point was never the title. It was never the corner office, or the promotion, or the applause. ***The point was building a life you actually want to live inside.*** So do the thing that makes you happy. Take the trip. Take that Friday afternoon off. Take that hour with your kids. Find the joy in the small, ordinary, unphotographed moments because those are the ones that will still be with you when the accolades have gone quiet.

You are going to be extraordinary. Not because you become someone else. Because you finally, fully become yourself.

I love you. I've got you. Keep going. With enormous pride, occasional exasperation, and all my love, Future you (and yes, you did it). ■

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BALANCE SHEET

The Invisible Liability Sitting on Every
Organisation's Books

Boards routinely scrutinise financial statements.

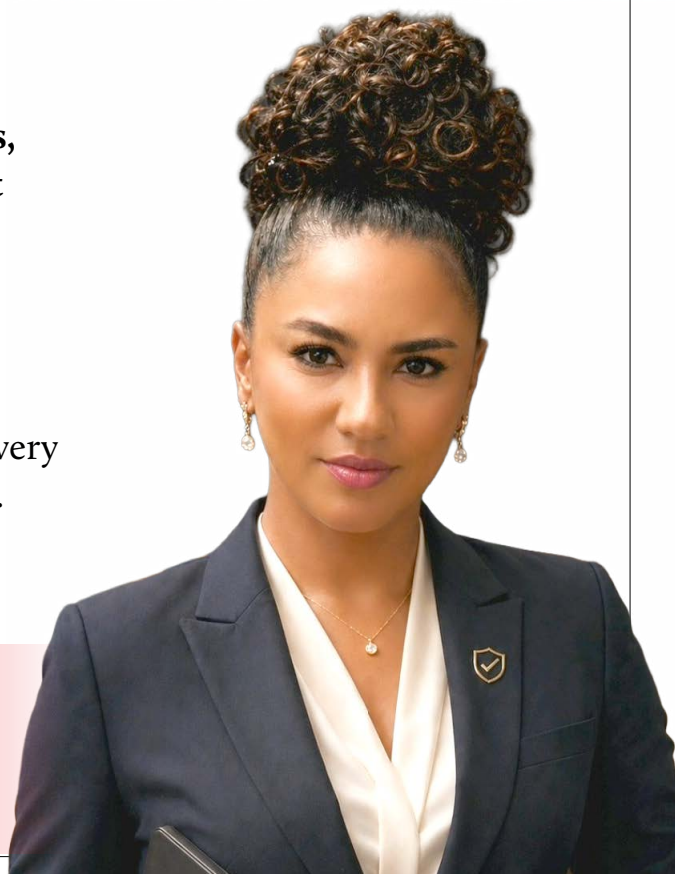
B Executives pour over operational dashboards.

Leadership teams debate margins, productivity, customer acquisition, market share and shareholder value.

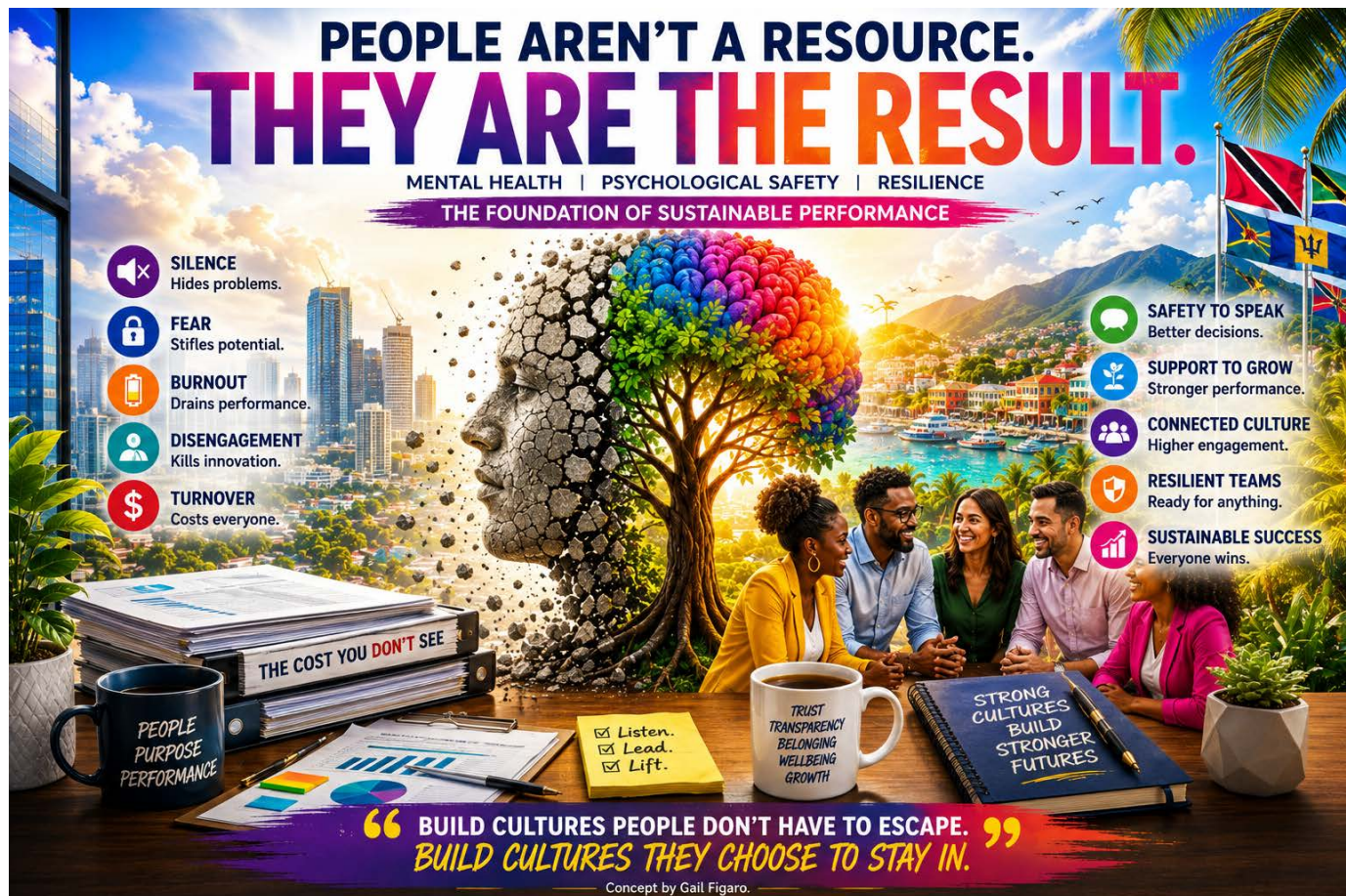
Every quarter, organisations become exceptionally good at measuring almost everything.

Except perhaps the one thing upon which every one of those measures ultimately depends....

People.



By Gail C. Figaro
Organisational & Business
Psychologist/Executive Leader



Not simply headcount.

Not Full-Time Equivalents.

Not labour costs.

Human beings.

Because while organisations meticulously manage their financial balance sheets, very few pay equal attention to what I believe is their Psychological Balance Sheet.

- Every interaction either builds trust or withdraws it.
- Every difficult conversation either strengthens confidence or quietly erodes it.
- Every leadership decision either deposits psychological capital...or creates psychological debt.

Unlike financial liabilities, this debt rarely appears on a balance sheet.

But eventually...

...someone always pays for it.

WE HAVE MISTAKEN SURVIVAL FOR SUCCESS

The Caribbean has always celebrated resilience.

Our history almost demanded it.

We admire people who “push through.”

We applaud those who never complain.

We celebrate the employee who works through illness.

The leader who never appears shaken.

The manager who answers emails long after midnight.

The professional who never says, “I can’t.”

Yet I often wonder...

Have we quietly begun rewarding the very behaviours that are breaking our people?

There is a profound difference between resilience...

...and repeatedly forcing people to survive environments that should never have required resilience in the first place.

One deserves celebration.

The other deserves examination.

THE HIDDEN LIABILITY

Every Chief Financial Officer can calculate payroll costs.

Most organisations can estimate customer acquisition costs.

Many can model inflation.

Very few attempt to calculate the cost of psychological debt.

Yet it may be among the largest liabilities any organisation carries.

Psychological debt accumulates quietly.

- Every time an employee believes speaking honestly could damage their career.
- Every time leaders punish transparency while claiming to value openness.
- Every time bad news arrives late because nobody wanted to be the first to raise it.
- Every time innovation dies before reaching the meeting room.

The World Health Organization now recognises burnout as an occupational phenomenon resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.

It is no longer viewed simply as an individual issue. It is increasingly recognised as a workplace challenge requiring organisational attention.

The consequences rarely arrive dramatically.

They accumulate.
Ideas never shared.
Mistakes reported too late.
High performers quietly disengaging.
Customers sensing something has shifted long before leaders do.
Like compound interest...
Psychological debt grows whether you acknowledge it or not.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IS NOT ABOUT BEING NICE

Perhaps one of the greatest misconceptions surrounding psychological safety is that it means lowering standards.
Nothing could be further from the truth.
Psychological safety is not the absence of accountability.
It is the absence of fear.
There is an important distinction.
Healthy organisations still have difficult conversations.
Performance still matters.
Poor behaviour still has consequences.
Expectations remain high.
The difference is that people do not fear telling the truth.

Google's widely cited *Project Aristotle* examined what separated exceptional teams from average ones. The strongest predictor was not technical brilliance, seniority or intelligence.

It was psychological safety.

Teams consistently performed better when people felt able to ask questions, acknowledge mistakes and respectfully challenge ideas without fear of humiliation or retaliation.

Accountability and psychological safety are not opposing forces.

In healthy organisations...

...they are partners.

LEADERSHIP CARRIES ITS OWN QUIET BURDEN

Discussions around workplace mental health often, and rightly, focus on employees.

However, leadership deserves an honest conversation too.

Leaders are expected to remain calm while carrying uncertainty they cannot disclose.

- To inspire while privately exhausted.
- To make unpopular decisions without losing credibility.

- To absorb conflict without becoming consumed by it.
- To demonstrate empathy while delivering commercial performance.
- To appear confident while making decisions with imperfect information.

Leadership can be profoundly isolating. Particularly if you are aiming to lead with integrity.

Ironically, those responsible for creating psychologically safe workplaces often have very few psychologically safe spaces themselves.

Deloitte's workplace wellbeing research continues to show that large proportions of employees, managers and executives report experiencing high levels of stress or exhaustion.

Leadership does not eliminate psychological strain; in many cases, it intensifies it.

Strong leaders are still human beings.

Treating them otherwise serves no one.

FEAR IS AN OPERATIONAL RISK

Many organisations still treat fear as though it is an effective management strategy.

In the short term...

Perhaps.

In the long term...

It becomes organisational poison.

Fear suppresses questions.

Suppresses learning.

Suppresses innovation.

Suppresses accountability.

Eventually...

It suppresses organisational performance itself.

People rarely become more committed because they are afraid.

They simply become more selective about what they reveal.

The result?

Leadership begins making decisions based on incomplete information while believing it possesses the complete picture.

That is not governance.

That is organisational blindness.

THIS IS NO LONGER AN HR CONVERSATION

For too long, mental health has been treated as though it belongs exclusively within Human Resources.

It does not. It belongs equally in:

- Boardrooms.
- Executive Committees.

- Risk Registers.
- Governance Frameworks.
- Business Continuity Plans.
- Operational Excellence programmes.
- Customer Experience strategies.

Because every one of those depends upon people making sound decisions under pressure.

The latest global workforce research suggests that younger professionals increasingly expect employers to take psychological wellbeing seriously, and many remain unconvinced that organisations are doing enough.

That should concern every executive team, not simply because of wellbeing, but because today's workforce represents tomorrow's leadership pipeline.

Poor psychological health is no longer simply a wellbeing concern.

It is increasingly becoming a governance risk.

The strongest organisations will not necessarily be the toughest.

They will be the healthiest.

- The ones capable of hearing difficult truths before they become crises.
- The ones where leaders can admit uncertainty without appearing weak.
- The ones where accountability and humanity comfortably coexist.
- The ones where resilience is developed through thoughtful leadership...

...rather than repeated exposure to dysfunction.

Resilience should never become an excuse for continually placing people in environments they should not have to survive.

FINAL REFLECTION

Perhaps the question is not whether Caribbean people are resilient.

History settled that argument generations ago.

The better question is this:

"If your organisation disappeared tomorrow...

Would people remember it as a place that merely demanded resilience...

...or as one that genuinely deserved it?" ■

SMALL
TALK



AN AMCHAM T&T EVENT

SMALL TALK, BIG LINKS: THREE EVENTS, MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

In July and September 2026, AMCHAM T&T's Chamber Experience & Imaging (CEI) Committee hosted three editions of its Small Talk, Big Links (STBL) networking series, bringing members together for engaging conversations, practical insights and opportunities to build meaningful connections.



"The Future of Cashless Commerce: What Every Business Leader Should Know" featured Cristina Abreu, Director, Global Transaction Banking,

Caribbean South & East, Scotiabank (inset), who shared insights into emerging payment trends, fintech innovation and cybersecurity, while highlighting considerations for businesses as commerce becomes increasingly digital. **Platinum Sponsor:** Scotiabank Trinidad and Tobago

"Beyond Resilience: Addressing Burnout at Its Source" had Dr. Mitra Maharaj, Occupational Medicine Physician at Horizon Integrated Health Hub, leading members through a discussion on recognising burnout, protecting mental wellbeing and creating healthier and more sustainable ways of working and living. **Platinum Sponsor:** Value Optical. **Gold Sponsor:** bmobile Business



Planning for **"Life's BIG Moments: Insurance Insights For Marriage, Home Ownership, Children, etc."** was Jarod Perryman, Managing Director, ScotiaLife Trinidad

& Tobago Limited and Regional Head, Insurance, Caribbean South & East, shared valuable insights on the role of proactive insurance planning in preparing for major milestones – from marriage and home ownership to starting a family – while helping individuals protect the people and goals that matter most. **Platinum Sponsor:** Scotiabank Trinidad and Tobago ■



30th Annual

HSSE

CONFERENCE

INTELLIGENT AND RESILIENT BY DESIGN



OCTOBER 27 - 28



8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.



Hyatt Regency Trinidad



Anna Henderson

President
AMCHAM T&T



Donnie Brown

CEO
Atlantic



Paula Davis

Global Speaker,
Strategic Advisor, &
Award-Winning
Author



Niel Harper

Cybersecurity & Digital
Trust Leader; Advisory,
ITU & ISACA
CyCIS



Kerry Rampersad

CEO (Ag.)
Heritage Petroleum
Company



Allan Stewart

Director
Tobago Emergency
Management Agency



Karen Tom Yew

General Manager, Group
Enterprise Risk Unit
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