The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

NIHERST Sci-TechKnoFest 2.0

"The Deep Tech Revolution"

Remarks By

Dr. the Honourable Nyan Gadsby-Dolly

Monday 21st March, 2022

SALUTATIONS:

- Dr. Andrew Hunte, Chairman NIHERST
- Mrs. Natasha Skinner Rocke, Deputy Chairman NIHERST
- Members of the NIHERST Board of Governors
- Mrs. Marleen Lord-Lewis President NIHERST
- Mrs. Candice Clarke-Salloum, Corporate Relations Manager, Shell Trinidad and Tobago –
- Mr. Gilbert Peterson S.C. Chairman Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
- Mrs. Cynthia Reddock-Downes, CEO Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
- Ms. Rhonda Francis Chairperson, Trinidad and Tobago Television
- Mr. David Roberts, CEO Trinidad and Tobago Television
- Mr. Earl Boodoosingh, Chairman Massy Foundation
- Ms. Vincent Pereira Chairman Republic Bank
- Mr. Nigel Baptiste President & CEORepublic Bank
- Mr. Conrad Email Chairman NGC
- Mr. Mark Loquan President NGC
- Mr. Neil Parsanlal, Chairman NALIS
- Ms. Paula Greene , Executive Director (Ag.)NALIS
- NIHERST Management & Staff

- Specially invited guest
- Members of the media
- Our viewing Audience

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Almost 10 years ago I was introduced the concept of the Big Idea. What this was, was the single big idea or concept that creatively addressed a problem. The concept is steeped in the field of Marketing, but the principle is one of tackling challenges or problems through innovative and creative solutions without putting limits on possibilities. With big ideas come big solutions; and I am reminded of the slogan "Go big or go home" a phrase steeped in the philosophy that encourages one to be bold.

I use this as my introduction to arrive at the question: where would be if the pioneers in science, technology, and innovation did not think BIG? We certainly would not be here today, communicating virtually from various corners of Trinidad and Tobago and the world. We would not be leveraging the technologies used in the financial, or telecommunication industry nor be able to broadcast events across the world in real time.

Can you imagine what the next *major* advancement in virtual communication and remote learning can be? and….what inputs do we need into our education system to support the development of yet unknown advancements in that space where, to day, only the imagination reigns? That is what "The Deep Tech Revolution" is all about.

The Ministry of Education, and by extension the government of Trinidad and Tobago is fully cognizant of the realities of today and the need to create an environment that fosters the creation of big ideas through science, technology and innovation. We recognise that technological innovations facilitate the efficient expansion and diversification of our various sectors through greater economies of scale, faster learning and responsiveness to change. We also recognize that talent is not the issue. The challenge we face is the collective vision. That is where initiatives like this and institutions like NIHERST and its partners play a critical role. You are tasked with bridging the disparate sections of the whole as it relates to science, technology and innovation, and creating the Big Idea.

Just recently we celebrated women in STEM, a phenomenon that is having a meaningful impact on the reimagining of possibilities and problem-solving through science, technology and innovation (STI). NIHERST's Sci-TechKnoFest is another a pivotal platform for students, researchers, and other professionals in this field. Not only does this forum enlighten the students and the public about global technological advances, but it serves as a spark plug of sorts to get us thinking about how we can contribute to the next technological breakthroughs. NIHERST Sci-TechKnoFest is charged with sensitising the public about the significant impact of science and

technology on our everyday lives, but it is also geared towards stimulating excitement around the work that is being done locally and globally, giving insight into the potential for the future.

Currently, the Ministry of Education is finalizing its Education Policy 2022-2027, and one of the most critical pillars is that of Digital Transformation, a process in the ministry that was fast tracked with the onset of the pandemic. This strategic area of focus for the Ministry is pivotal in moving us forward as we prepare our students for the unknowns of tomorrow. The world and education for the future must have science, technology and or innovation as its foundation. It must be a system that creates thinkers of big ideas.

This brings me to the four (4) strategic pillars that drive NIHERST's agenda, the very pillars on which this nation's dive into deep tech can be based and drive the development of sustainable solutions.

Stakeholder engagement…as the first pillar is significant, why? Because we cannot do it alone. In 2021, the theme for the first phase on the national consultation on education was It Takes a Village. Collectivism in thought and action is critical to move the agenda forward. Stakeholder engagement, therefore, is vital to effectively explore the depths of potential that exist in the context of any innovative solution. I therefore wish to thank the stakeholders

already on board as their involvement should be reflected among the teams crafting solutions; the certifying agencies; the learning institutions and certainly, among end users or beneficiaries.

Along with a collaborative and inclusive approach must come proper management and structures to support the range of dynamics present within cross-cutting groups. Further, when exploring such novel territories, the second pillar of ***effective and efficient organisation*** can ensure that findings and outcomes are well established, documented, and utilised. This is the avenue to enhance the likelihood of follow-through from problem identification to solution adoption and likewise, from training to practice.

Appropriateness of the infrastructure, framework or ecosystem created for deep tech projects is an immensely critical matter. The right infrastructure sets the foundation to make a world of difference if we want to truly delve into design thinking, suitably incorporating scientific and technological opportunities.

The fourth pillar is ***resource mobilisation and financial stability***. Deep tech ventures often require large investments. Beyond these investments, students and researchers ought to factor in financial feasibility of solutions in relation to the beneficiaries and expected outcomes.

Sci-TechKnoFest is a ripe opportunity for the gathering of stakeholders. This platform can undoubtedly stimulate new explorations in the deep tech space as well as collaborations on existing and new projects. Apart from reaching the experts entrenched in STEM, this festival continues to excel in its ability to utilise compelling and inspiring methods to reach those who consider themselves novices or strangers to the field. This means successful promotion of prototypes and pilot projects and identification of untapped resources. It also means our students at every level gain first-hand insight into what could be their future professions and contributions to society. Indeed a spectacular accomplishment!

The rapid advancement of technology is putting pressure on all countries to transform and become more creative. This must therefore be imbedded in the mindset of our teachers, students, business community, educational institutions just to name a few.

I take this opportunity to congratulate NIHERST on the continued work, particularly as in relates to sensitisation and harnessing the potential that exists within our young people. Over the years, Sci-TechKnoFest has contributed remarkably to increasing the public knowledge, engagement, and appreciation of Science, Technology and Innovation.

To the sponsors who have recognised the potential that lies within the fields of Science, Technology and Innovation, your strategic partnership is applauded.

Deep tech ventures offer prime examples of the synergy that can exist when science, technology and innovation are brought together. This multifaceted yet synergistic approach is vital when striving to make 'the impossible' possible. Solving big problems requires big ideas. It requires a deep understanding of science; an innovative outlook and the use of an array of technologies.

Ladies and gentlemen, as an educator, a proud woman in STEM and Minister of Education, I am personal invested in the successful transformation of our education system strongly influenced by science, technology and innovation. To all those who will benefit from this festival, I urge you to take this opportunity to advance your learning, broaden your network and be inspired to think big.

Thank you, and may God bless you all.