



Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Symposium “REINVENTING THE TRIANGLE”

Achievements in Creating, Transforming and Expanding Business and Development Relationships with Africa

The following are some of the main impacts of 22 annual Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Symposia organized by the Emancipation Support Committee of Trinidad & Tobago from 2001 to 2023. The symposia followed business luncheons in 1999 and 2000.

The Symposia provided information, analysis, contacts and incentives that:

1. Positively influenced government economic policy in relation to Africa.
 - a. In discussions with the Emancipation Support Committee of Trinidad & Tobago following the 2006 Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Symposium which he formally opened, the then Minister of Trade and Industry, Honourable Kenneth Valley, agreed to organize a trade mission to five West African countries. The ECOWAS Secretary General, at the time, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas who had delivered the feature address at that year’s business symposium, agreed that ECOWAS would facilitate the mission.
 - b. Building cooperation in the hydrocarbon industries was one of the specific objectives proposed by the ESCTT¹. For internal reasons the GOTT eventually postponed the mission. However in January of 2007, the then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Honourable Patrick Manning, speaking at an African Union Summit, announced that Trinidad and Tobago would provide technical services in the hydrocarbon industry to African countries that requested such assistance. This was the beginning of a new level of cooperation and economic involvement in Africa by the government of Trinidad and Tobago, which has brought our country substantial benefits.
2. Changed widespread negative perceptions about Africa² and injected into the wider stream of business consciousness the idea of Africa as a continent ripe for investment,

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The ESCTT report on the 2006 Symposium includes a resolution which states in part “..given the widespread expertise in the oil industry which exists within the African world, it is timely and urgent for the African Union to take steps, through NEPAD or any other appropriate mechanism, to mobilize this expertise to provide advice to the AU and governments of oil rich nations in Africa, to assist in planning and negotiation, and in re-negotiation of contracts, and to provide all other services necessary to ensure that African countries receive the wealth which is their just due from their oil resources.”

²An article in T&T News Blog, Feb 2, 2007 accused PM Manning of running “**to visit poor ancestral countries. These have no trade and economic significance for us..**”

partnering, trade and other business relationships. The CEO of Trinidad and Tobago's Energy Chamber is one of those persons who has acknowledged the influence of the business symposia on the Chamber's successful thrust into Africa.

3. Built a wide range of contacts and organizational relationships that form a basis for guiding and facilitating participation of local and regional businesses on the African continent. Institutions include:
 - a. **ECOWAS**, following the participation of its former General Secretary, Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas, who was the keynote speaker in 2006.
 - b. **AUC** (African Union Commission) particularly through membership in its Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO)
 - c. **NEPAD** (New Partnership for African Development), changed in November 2018 to **AUDA-NEPAD** (African Union Development Agency - New Partnership for Africa's Development Planning and Co-ordinating Agency)
 - d. **ABG** (Africa Business Group), which was presented with the award for **2017 Consulting Firm of the Year** during the 2018 South Africa Professional Services Awards.
 - e. **CFA** (Constituency For Africa) led by Mr. Melvin Foote who has decades of experience in lobbying for African countries and interests in the United States and is well connected to businesses and governments in Africa. He provides consultancy services for firms seeking to invest in Africa.
 - f. **NBCC** (National Black Chamber of Commerce, USA). Lobbies and seeks opportunities for African-American businesses, which includes partnering with non-American enterprises.
4. Made many African countries aware of the technical capability of Trinidad and Tobago leading to delegations from a number of African countries and students being sent here for training.
5. Received potentially lucrative opportunities on the African continent for local businesses
 - a. Range of infrastructure projects in East Africa, including road construction and rural electrification, through a Uganda firm (local firms were not interested. This was during TT boom).
 - b. 2016 offer by USA firm, BMG3 Enterprises, to incorporate Caribbean contractors in major construction projects in three African countries.
 - c. Request for diesel from Kenya (TT diesel did not meet the specifications)
 - d. Opportunities for asphalt sales to South Africa (2008). Neither the interested South African Company whose representatives ESCTT officials took to meet with Lake Asphalt directors nor ESCTT personnel got definitive responses to requests.
 - e. Openings for provision of technical assistance to or partnering between TT energy sector firms and Black Economic Empowerment firms in South Africa through South Africa Supplier Development Agency, SASDA (2008)
6. Expressions of interest in closed Trinidad & Tobago steel mill came from two firms contacted through foreign participants in the 2016 symposium. This followed discussions

arranged by the ESCTT between a foreign presenter and Executive officers of the Steel Workers Union.

7. One of the persons carded to speak at the 2018 business symposium had an interest in our bitumen. He was working jointly with a local partner. The two parties were linked by a presenter at an earlier symposium.
8. Many successful business contacts are made annually through private meetings between foreign speakers and/or participants and local participants.
9. Follow up arrangements are made as well between overseas participants and speakers at the symposium. One such former participant from a Caribbean country spoke about his successes in Africa at the 2019 symposium. He expressed an interest in having a co-investor from Trinidad & Tobago in one of his new enterprises.
10. A former presenter from Sierra Leone, inspired by the Trinidad and Tobago experience, is working towards strengthening the business and developmental relationship between Sierra Leone and Trinidad & Tobago with tourism as a major area of focus. He also spoke to State parties in Sierra Leone about seeking TT expertise in relation to that country's hydrocarbon potential.
11. We have received reports of new business arrangements generated on the African continent between participants from different African countries who met at the TT symposium.