



## P R E S S R E L E A S E

### **INVOCAB Launches in Trinidad and Tobago**

*Project will promote Science, Technology and Innovation in schools across the country*

**February 26, 2015 PORT-OF-SPAIN:** On Wednesday 25 February, NIHERST launched the Improving Innovation Capacities in the Caribbean (INVOCAB) Project at the Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre, Couva. The aim of the project is to promote Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in primary and secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, with the ultimate goal of developing critical and innovative thinking and problem-solving abilities in schoolchildren.

INVOCAB is a joint initiative of NIHERST, the Jamaica-based Scientific Research Council (SRC) and the Technische Universität Dresden of Dresden, Germany. It will be implemented over the course of three years in collaboration with the Ministries of Education in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, The Mico University College (Jamaica), Church Teachers' College (Jamaica), the University of Technology (Jamaica), as well as with input from other stakeholders.

The project is being piloted locally in four primary schools – Santa Rosa Government Primary, Malabar Government Primary, Bon Air Government Primary and St. Dominic's Government Primary -- and four secondary schools – San Juan North Secondary, St. Joseph's College, St. Augustine Secondary and El Dorado Secondary. Principals, teachers and students from these schools who attended the launch eagerly previewed the science kits that will soon be available at their respective schools.

The need for INVOCAB stems from the need to develop in Trinidad and Tobago an education system that supports innovation. This can only be possible through improvements in education infrastructures, teachers' competencies, science centres, science-based events and education policies. Such an innovative system would, in turn, allow Trinidad and Tobago to become more competitive globally and aid its transformation into a diversified, knowledge-intensive economy placing among the top ranking countries in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor as well as the Global Innovation Index, where unfortunately today the country still ranks low.

In her welcome address, Acting President of NIHERST, Ms. Joycelyn Lee Young reminded the young people in the audience of the pervasive role of science and the application of science through technology in transforming society and human existence. She stated that Trinidad and Tobago needed to be more, "innovative and strategic in the use of our resources to stay competitive at a global level. Occupations in STEM-related (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) careers are some of the fastest growing and best paid of the 21st century,

and they often have the greatest potential for job growth, and for brain drain. It is important that TT trains enough of our youth to pursue STEM subjects and careers. It is important therefore that we instil and maintain student interest in STEM and ensure that they enter the work force with sufficient knowledge to make worthwhile contributions to our STEM industries.”

Given the central role teachers play in advancing STEM education, Ms. Lee Young considered INVOCAB to be a necessary and timely initiative for helping teachers inspire and motivate their students by making STEM learning in schools more engaging.

Speaking on behalf of the Delegation of the EU to Trinidad and Tobago was Programme Officer Kathrin Renner, who stated that the European Union has pledged close to TT\$7 million towards this project under the Africa Caribbean Pacific (ACP) Science and Technology Programme, as part of its mission to assist Trinidad and Tobago to modernise and diversify its economic base through innovation and technology.

Ms. Renner also stated that: “The EU is very proud to play a major part in the improvement of Trinidad and Tobago's business environment through innovation and technology. We have been doing so since 2011 though several EU grants including for the development of an Integrated Business Incubator System; for programmes aimed at strengthening the development of non-energy clusters and for diversification of the agricultural sector in the aftermath of the closure of the sugar industry. The latter is aimed at fostering innovation in a sector that currently relies too heavily on traditional methods.”

Ms. Renner added, “The logic behind all these programmes is to support the government to provide a better policy and regulatory framework for businesses, to modernize business support services, to be more transparent and to increase accountability.”

Looking ahead, the EU remains committed to assisting Trinidad and Tobago in the development of a sustainable, competitive and innovative business environment. Such assistance will be through the provision of financial and technical support to:

- Improve the governance structures for innovation
- Develop stronger non-energy clusters
- Increase research activity and create stronger links between academia and the productive sector, and,
- Identify ways of attracting and nurturing financing for innovation.

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