



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Ministry of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence

FEATURE ADDRESS

BY

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AT THE

HUAWEI ICT DAY "AI EMPOWERS T&T'S SMART FUTURE"

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INTRODUCTION

Good morning everyone

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the Huawei team for the kind invitation to speak at today's event. This conversation could not be more timely, as Artificial Intelligence continues to shape the global discourse, presenting both unprecedented challenges and remarkable opportunities.

As a nation, we must not only acknowledge this shift but also strategically align ourselves with the transformative potential AI holds for Trinidad and Tobago's digital future.

Huawei has captured this vision eloquently with its commitment to *"bringing digital to every person, home, and organisation for a fully connected, intelligent world."* That sentiment resonates deeply with the approach of this Government, that is, to harness the power of AI and digital transformation not as a novelty, but as a means of improving lives, enhancing public services, and building a more efficient, connected society.

SMART TECHNOLOGY

When we speak about *smart cities*, *smart grids*, and *smart technologies*, it's easy to focus solely on algorithms, automation, and infrastructure. But for Trinidad and Tobago, the future we are building is not only smart, it is **connected, people-centred, and inclusive.**

Our goal is to develop a **digital nation that delivers for everyone**, whether it's a market vendor in Sangre Grande or an ICT student in Signal Hill, Tobago. Every citizen must be empowered to benefit meaningfully from digital progress.

In fact, I would go so far as to say that this Government is not merely building a “smart country,” but rather a **deeply interconnected nation**, one where digital transformation touches lives in practical, measurable ways.

When I speak of being *smart* or *interconnected*, I speak of a **Connected Trinidad and Tobago**

- where a mother can renew her child's birth certificate online, without taking two taxis and a day off work
- where a small business owner can access a grant or file taxes without facing long lines or bureaucratic hurdles
- and where a farmer, working under the sun, can access weather updates or apply for government subsidies via a simple mobile app

This is the vision we are pursuing - a digital society that anticipates needs, reduces burdens, and builds trust. As a Government, we are committed to serving our people with empathy and efficiency, ensuring that no citizen is left behind in this digital era.

Senior citizens may not be the digital natives one might expect in a technology-focused environment, but their enthusiasm and willingness to learn were nothing short of remarkable. Many were using tablets, setting up email addresses, and accessing government services online, **some for the**

very first time in their lives. Their willingness reminds me of this quote “Progress is not always swift, and it requires effort, perseverance and a willingness to learn and adapt”. This is what they taught me.

Yes, a few were even upgrading their WhatsApp “Good Morning” broadcast messages, but more importantly, they were not there to become coders or engineers. They were there to stay connected. Their presence speaks to something profoundly human - the desire to belong, to participate, and to remain relevant in a fast-evolving digital landscape. As a Government, we are proud to support initiatives that ensure **no citizen - regardless of age - is left behind** on our path toward a digitally empowered Trinidad and Tobago.

This is the true driver of our digital transformation. It is not solely about artificial intelligence, applications, or algorithms, **it is about people.** It is about ensuring that every citizen, from our youth to our elders, is equipped to participate meaningfully in a connected, modern society.

That same access and sense of confidence we foster today could very well empower our senior citizens, or their grandchildren, to become the next generation of coders, entrepreneurs, or digital creatives.

SOCIETY OF COLLABORATORS

Let there be no doubt - Trinidad and Tobago is not short on talent. We are home to one of the most vibrant and diverse developer communities in the Caribbean. And while our developers may write the code, all of us, through collaboration and shared vision, are writing the future of this nation.

As we forge a nation of builders, our digital transformation is not defined solely by coders behind screens. It includes teachers embracing new technologies to better engage their students. It includes public servants reimagining and streamlining government services for greater efficiency. It includes our creatives harnessing digital tools to tell uniquely Caribbean stories with global resonance. And it includes our small and medium business owners entering the digital marketplace for the very first time.

Whether you are a policymaker, a parent, a pensioner, or a programmer, you have an essential role in shaping our digital future. That role is to ensure that every voice, especially those historically excluded or underserved, is brought to the table.

This is not about ticking boxes. It is about asking the right questions: How can artificial intelligence serve our people, our values, and our collective vision for Trinidad and Tobago?

It is through questions like these that we embrace the true spirit of collaboration, recognizing that solutions are not simply imported - they are conceived right here, **shaped by our lived experiences, our unique challenges, and our shared aspirations.** Our goal is for every Trinbagonian to see themselves as part of a digital nation, not just as users of technology, but as contributors to it. As creators, innovators, and owners of the future we are building together.

So, what exactly are we building? The answer is clear: we are building a **digital nation**. And like any resilient nation, it must rest on four pillars, that is, 1) infrastructure 2) services 3) identity, and 4) inclusion.

Thus far, we have made meaningful strides toward that vision, including:

- The expansion of public Wi-Fi hotspots in schools, health centres, and transportation hubs
- The rollout of digital literacy programmes for seniors, youth, and small business owners
- The establishment of ICT Access Centres - safe, welcoming spaces where citizens can connect to the internet, access devices, receive government services, and build digital skills
- And the upskilling of our public service, empowering our officers to be digital champions rather than digital barriers

True transformation does not reside in a single app or platform. It begins when people believe the system works for them, and digital tools are functional, trustworthy, inclusive, and empowering.

GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

Globally, nations have made tremendous strides in harnessing artificial intelligence and digital transformation to address complex challenges. These case studies offer valuable insights. But let me be clear, Trinidad and Tobago is not here to copy and paste another country's model.

What works in Singapore or Estonia may not work in Siparia, Chaguanas, Arima or even Scarborough, and that is not a setback. It is an opportunity. An opportunity to lead with intention and innovate in ways that reflect our unique culture.

Of course, no transformation happens in isolation. This is where Huawei, and many other committed partners play a pivotal role. For us at the Ministry of Public Administration and Digital Transformation, public-private partnerships are indispensable. These collaborations serve as critical nodes in our mission to build a connected, inclusive, and secure Trinidad and Tobago.

Huawei has supported us in multiple ways, from hardware infrastructure to training opportunities, where some of our very own citizens boast about visiting Huawei factories in Shenzhen, China. I reiterate here today that we welcome this continued collaboration, especially in areas such as:

- AI capacity-building for citizens
- Supporting the development of secure cloud services and efficient AI tools
- And contributing to inclusive innovation ecosystems that leave no one behind

These partnerships matter. It enables innovation exchange, foster a shared sense of purpose, and reinforce our commitment to cultural identity and data sovereignty.

The journey toward a truly digital nation cannot be undertaken by any one sector, ministry, or company alone. It requires collective vision, shared responsibility, and coordinated action. It is a path we must build and walk together.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I want to say to everyone here – all of our tech leaders, policymakers, students, public sector workers and entrepreneurs – that the most powerful thing about digital transformation is not the technology itself. It is the **possibility** it unlocks. It is the possibility for the Government to be a platform for innovation, inclusion and equity.

I encourage you to keep asking hard questions, forging bold collaborations and building systems that work for us, for our economy, our sovereignty and our children's future. As we build this nation together, we must stay anchored in our values, which are the people, purpose and progress.

As a Government, we are committed to building and shaping a smart and connected future. Let us continue to invest, in our people, in our shared purpose, and in the partnerships that will drive sustainable innovation and inclusive progress.

Thank you.