

**Opening Remarks**  
**Misha Lobban Clarke, ED, BCCI**  
**“Covid-19 and Current Times”**

Good morning and welcome to members of the Barbados Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCI); members of the regional network of Chambers of Commerce, and all other participants online.

Thank you for joining us for the first webinar in the series being hosted by the Barbados Chamber entitled, **“Practical Considerations for E-Commerce in the New Normal.”**

Special welcome to our panel of experts who will be formally introduced later during the session – Ms. Brenda Pope, Mr. Leslie Lee Fook, Ms. Simone Padmore, Mr. Niel Harper, Mrs. Susan Boyea – on behalf of the Chamber, I thank you for agreeing to share your perspectives with us today.

Today, we take a look at the ‘COVID-19’ pandemic through the lens of Information Communication and Technology (ICT). Our hosting of this virtual session is an example of how increased technology use has served to keep us connected and productive during this global pandemic.

It was the internet that took us through the period of national lock-down and it was innovation and adoption of new distribution models that facilitated our access to goods and services from the confines of our homes.

It is against the backdrop of this 'new normal', that businesses in Barbados and the rest of the Caribbean have been forced to retool, rethink and re-invent strategies that will ensure business continuity and growth. From jump-starting new business development initiatives through greater use of the technology, to the deployment of new e-commerce solutions, to rethinking cybersecurity programs, to driving marketing initiatives based on data analytics rather than intuition - companies must continue to re-pivot in order to remain competitive in this global space.

According to media reports this morning, the World Health Organisation (WHO) warns that there might never be a silver bullet for COVID-19 in the form of a perfect vaccine and the road to normality would be long with some countries requiring a reset of strategy.

With no end in sight to the COVID-19 pandemic and in the absence of a crystal ball to guide us through this crisis, we are challenged to think differently, think creatively, and embrace a future driven by technology. From the smallest to the largest service provider – now, more than ever is the time for strategic analysis and innovation, if we are to survive this 'new normal'.

To underpin it all, there is a need for cybersecurity awareness and safeguards especially as it relates to the support for e-commerce within the emerging digital economies around the world. As a region, we are a large mobile market and that makes us vulnerable to cyber threats. For the business community, cybersecurity solutions and measures are therefore necessary to protect key infrastructure and protect the bottom line of our businesses. This will have to become

part of our new normal in the current and post Covid-19 environment.

As the trusted voice of the business community, charged with helping local businesses to grow by facilitating a more enabling business environment in Barbados and the CARICOM Single Market, the BCCI is pleased to facilitate today's discussion on this important consideration.

Today's webinar is the result of a BCCI COVID-19 impact survey which focused on assessing ICT gaps and opportunities that exist to improve businesses and the delivery of products and services through greater utilization of technology as well as the key considerations and security measures to using e-commerce. Our next presenter, Ms. Brenda Pope will provide a more detailed analysis of the results of this post-COVID Business Survey.

Special thanks to the members of the Chamber's Digital Society Committee for taking the lead in organizing this webinar that seeks to examine the linkages between our current reality and ICT and how e-commerce and data analytics can be used as strategic tools by businesses in this new environment.

But let it not be a one-sided discourse. Time has been allotted for questions and answers – and we look forward to you the participants adding your voice to this important conversation.

Once again, I am pleased to welcome you on behalf of the Barbados Chamber and we look forward to an engaging and productive session.