



The Honourable Davendranath Tancoo, MP

Ministry of Finance

**Opening Ceremony on the Training on the
use of the EU Copernicus Satellite Data and
GIS Services**

Monday 02nd February, 2026

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Salutations

- **Her Excellency Cécile Tassin-Pelzer**, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago;
- **Diego Calatayud Soriana, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy** of the Kingdom of Spain to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
- **Martin Langer**, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to Trinidad and Tobago
- **Mr. Bruce Spencer**, Director of Statistics, Central Statistical Office
- **Technical Experts and Facilitators** from the Copernicus Programme;
- **Distinguished Training Participants;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Introduction

It is indeed my distinct pleasure to open this training session, where we will explore the practical applications of Satellite Data and Geographic Information Systems. Today, we are not merely discussing imagery but we are also advancing our broader mission of advancing our national development through digital transformation.

A Vision for Evidence Based Governance

In Trinidad and Tobago, we acknowledge that we have been proudly and profoundly fortunate and blessed; we have, thus far, been spared the full magnitude of natural disasters that have impacted our regional neighbours including Jamaica. However, as a Small Island Developing State, we cannot rely on fortune alone. The growing threat of climate change is no longer a distant concern but a real and present reality that demands our utmost readiness.

From the erosion of our coastlines to the increasing unpredictability of extreme weather, we face unique challenges that require us to move beyond intuition. To safeguard our future, we must rely on high-fidelity, real-time data.

The primary objective of this week is to equip our government - our ministries, institutions, and agencies with the specialized skills necessary to leverage Copernicus Sentinel satellite data efficiently. Beyond the software and the satellites, this initiative is a pledge to safeguard our people through the power of informed, evidence-based action.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the European Union for your support. As a long-standing ally, your continued support remains a cornerstone of Trinidad and Tobago's journey toward a sustainable and digital future. We view this collaboration as far more than a technical exchange; rather, it is a strategic partnership cementing our ability to build a truly resilient economy.

This synergy is exemplified by our shared successes, notably the **€8 million 'Shaping the Future of Innovation' program** and the **€4 million Global Climate Change Alliance Plus grant**, the latter of which successfully delivered large-scale solar power to Piarco International Airport

Strategic Alignment and Fiscal Responsibility

As Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development, my focus is always on fiscal management and ensuring that our national investments deliver tangible returns. Traditional modes of acquiring satellite data for land management, disaster monitoring, or national security are often time consuming and prohibitively expensive.

The Copernicus programme operates on an open and free data policy. Currently, state agencies may spend upwards of **US \$45,000** annually for Geographic Information Systems services. Across more than **20** state agencies, transitioning to Copernicus Services is projected to save our country approximately **US \$1 million** annually, making this an economically sound and strategic upgrade. By integrating these services, we move from broad estimates to precision management—optimizing resources by identifying exactly where road infrastructure or agricultural support is required. This ensures that every dollar of public expenditure is directed toward maximum impact.

Furthermore, this initiative is directly aligned with the Government's **National Development Strategy**. Specifically, it falls under our **Fourth Strategic Pillar: *Modernising Infrastructure, Transport, and Digital Services***. By moving toward an open data model, we are modernizing the State, improving accountability, and using technology to deliver better outcomes in land management, agriculture, and disaster preparedness. This is about building a smarter government that uses 21st century tools to solve age-old problems.

Our Path to Mastery

The week-long curriculum is designed to bridge the gap between policy and practice through a structured progression of learning. We will begin by establishing a foundational understanding of Earth Observation for our decision makers. This knowledge will then be applied through hands-on exercises targeting critical local issues such as **oil spill detection, bush fire monitoring, and food security** in Trinidad and Tobago.

The technical staff will move into advanced data processing while utilizing specialized software such as **SNAP 13.0** and **QGIS** to master disaster and land management workflows. Finally, we will engage directly with European industry stakeholders to define technical specifications for future procurement and to foster long term partnerships.

Our Expected Outcomes

By the end of this workshop, our institutions will possess an increased capacity to utilize Earth observation data. We expect to see improved

environmental monitoring, more efficient disaster risk management, and a stronger foundation for future international collaboration.

Closing

In closing, I wish to re-emphasize our profound gratitude to the European Union for their vision and partnership. This digital offering is a vital contribution to our national resilience, ensuring our professionals possess the cutting-edge tools necessary to safeguard our environment and fortify our generations to come.

To the participants: I urge you to engage deeply. The data you master this week will become the lens through which we view our national challenges, and the foundation upon which we build a more secure, data-driven future for Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you.