

**Message by Senator the Honourable Dennis Moses, Minister of Foreign
and CARICOM Affairs on the occasion of Commonwealth Day 2016**

14th March, 2016.

Today, the international community is confronting numerous complex challenges on several fronts, manifested, among other things, in unprecedented threats to national and international security, internal and international conflict, rising unemployment and underemployment resulting in increased pressure to make the goal of decent work for all a reality, natural disasters and extreme weather events, the rise and rapid spread of infectious diseases, profound social instability, large scale involuntary migration within and beyond international borders, cyberattacks and data fraud or thefts and worryingly, growing incidence of youth violence. These phenomena impact the survival and survivability of this and future generations and have engendered collaborative intervention by the community of nations to seek durable solutions in an all-encompassing framework for sustainable development.

Bringing development to people all over the world so that they may live in dignity while enjoying their inalienable rights as human beings requires more than action by the state. It requires cooperation and partnership among a broad coalition of actors, led by the Government, including Civil Society, the Private Sector, Labour, International Organisations, the international development community, Academia, the Philanthropic Community, among others, working with unity of purpose to change lives through eradicating poverty and socio-economic marginalisation, and bringing hope and promise to multitudes where misery and hopelessness reigned before.

The international community must therefore be commended for its astute leadership in recognising the unbreakable nexus between sustainability as a sine qua non for ridding the world permanently of poverty and deprivation, and inclusiveness, by which all countries and people share the commitment to take action, albeit on a differentiated basis, to create sustainable economic growth and wealth, and indeed, to share in the benefits of prosperity and social stability, by lifting people up and sustaining vibrant, productive and safe communities.

As a voluntary association of 53 sovereign states, the Commonwealth has long understood that robust growth and development would be impossible without the full scale engagement of the people. Over the years,

successive Meetings of the Heads of Government have issued mandates targeting building more democratic societies and stronger communities across the Commonwealth; societies that fully respect the rule of law and human rights, and besides, that give priority to raising the standard of living and welfare of the people. It is against that background that the Commonwealth has designated for 2016 the theme “*An Inclusive Commonwealth*,” to underscore to the international community at large and to its membership, that as an association of sovereign states freely cooperating together, in common purpose, the Commonwealth is very much in the vanguard of the global campaign to achieve sustainable development, as defined in Agenda 2030 adopted by the United Nations in September, 2015.

With its diverse trans-continental membership, the Commonwealth enjoys a respected brand identity as an effective international network for dialogue, cooperation and development, functioning by consensus, even in the face of its multiple identities, traditions and cultures. One of the great defining characteristics of the Commonwealth, therefore, is its extraordinary diversity and richness of cultures and belief systems, overlain by widely differing socio-economic systems. This diversity and inclusiveness, where large and small, rich and poor address common problems, is aptly depicted in the logo for the 2016 theme as the different pieces, of various sizes and shapes relate one with the other to form a single unified unit; a discernible working whole.

At Singapore in 1971, the leaders set out to define the core values and guiding principles of the association, out of which came the consensus that cooperation towards inclusiveness and counteracting inequality and inequity is paramount. It is no surprise then that these founding principles have found their way into the Commonwealth Charter, promulgated by Her Majesty in 2013, which expresses the commitment of the Peoples and Governments of the Commonwealth to democracy and the rule of law, good governance and to respecting and upholding human rights and human dignity within a framework of equality of all.

On this Commonwealth Day 2016, the Government and People of Trinidad and Tobago join with other Commonwealth Governments and People everywhere in celebrating another year of sterling achievement by this great Organisation in which people remain the central focus. The Commonwealth is the face of diversity and inclusiveness in the world, bringing people together under an umbrella of shared values and with a common purpose, that is, to improve the lives of those on the fringes of society, and so, to give practical effect to the goal that “no one should be left behind.” In so far as the Government is concerned, the tenets that guide our relations with the Commonwealth are quite the same as those that frame the relationship

between the Government and the People – that we take responsibility for each other in knitting together strong, self-reliant communities, with open dialogue and engagement between the Government and the people on issues that impact them directly and, therefore, committed to accountability and transparency in government, thus bringing the Government closer to the people they govern.

On this Commonwealth Day, I therefore call on the People of Trinidad and Tobago to work together in solidarity for the good of the nation and all its People, so that we may realise our national quest, “together we aspire, together we achieve”.



Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs

14th March, 2016

