

**Statement delivered by Ms Reita Toussaint,
Permanent Secretary (Ag.), Ministry of Foreign and
CARICOM Affairs on the Occasion of Europe Day,
09 May 2017**

Permit me to extend to you greetings from Senator the Honourable Dennis Moses, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs and also his apologies for not being able to join you this evening due to his attendance at the sitting of the Senate. In his absence I will deliver his Statement on his behalf.

On behalf of Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I am pleased to join you this evening in commemorating Europe Day.

This year's celebration is particularly significant for two reasons. Firstly, 2017 marks the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome by six (6) European countries, heralding the start of the partnership that later became known as the European Union. This partnership has led to sixty years (60) years of regional peace and integration which has undoubtedly benefitted the many peoples comprising the EU's twenty-eight (28) Member States.

Secondly, this is Ambassador Biesebroek's first Europe Day celebration in Trinidad and Tobago. His arrival in the latter part of last year as resident Ambassador and Head of the European Union Delegation has been most welcome and is a sign of the active relations that exist between Trinidad and Tobago and the European Union.

The European Union has been an important economic and social development partner for Trinidad and Tobago since the signing of the Lomé Convention in 1975, between the then European Economic Community and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP). Our partnership has since evolved, under the current Cotonou Partnership Agreement, and is now marked by development, economic and trade, and political cooperation. This partnership has, and continues to provide, crucial support in the areas of education, crime and security, culture, food security, and the diversification of our economy. In this regard, I must acknowledge and express appreciation for the assistance rendered by the EU to our national development through the facilitation of funding under the EU's European Development Fund.

In these times of economic uncertainty, the diversification of our economy is a priority on the national agenda. This Government has therefore identified opportunities in the areas of agriculture, the creative industries, information and communication technology, financial services, manufacturing, maritime-related services, and tourism.

We expect that as we build production and trade capacity in agriculture and manufacturing, with the support of our development partners, that these goods will find ready markets in Europe through the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement for the over 500 million consumers Ambassador Biesebroek (has previously referred to who are looking for quality goods).

Similarly, we expect that as we build capacity for the delivery of services in the creative industries, information and communication technology, and financial services, in tandem with the implementation of the Short Stay Visa Waiver Agreement between Trinidad and Tobago and the EU, that the Services provisions of the Economic Partnership Agreement will be unlocked for our mutual benefit.

Your Excellency, in the sixty years since the formation of the EU, I am sure that you will agree that the world's landscape has changed considerably. While we have enjoyed many benefits from globalisation, we have also faced many challenges. In the world's ever-changing landscape, the downturn of economies and threats to security have greatly affected the lives of all of our citizens. It is only through continued cooperation across borders and between regions can we hope to achieve sustainable economic prosperity and the security of our peoples.

In these times when national budgets and limited resources are fully committed as we try to serve our peoples, and negative forces seek to disrupt our peaceful existence, cooperation between international partners becomes more important to ensuring that our advancement, especially that of is not further hindered.

Your Excellency, the strong and cordial relations between Trinidad and Tobago and the EU and its member states have been forged through interaction at the multilateral and bilateral levels. I am confident that, if we hold fast to our shared ideals and interests, and build on our history of

cooperation, we would strengthen the deep bonds of friendship and collaboration to the benefit of our respective peoples.

In closing, on behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, please join me in a toast on the occasion of Europe Day as I wish the Governments and peoples of the European Union continued peace and prosperity. **To the European Union.**