



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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Trinidad and Tobago

National Statement

by

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Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

for the

General Debate of the Seventy-second Session of the

United Nations General Assembly

United Nations, New York
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Mr. President
Secretary General
Excellencies
Ladies and gentlemen

Each year, as a community of nations, we gather together to reaffirm the possibilities and potential that come from our resolve, that finding solutions to the many challenges facing our planet can best be achieved through our collective action, shared dialogue, striving for peace and a decent life for all peoples.

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I am honoured and delighted to address this Assembly today. I extend heartfelt congratulations to you on your election as President of the 72nd Session. We are confident that you will discharge your mandate with efficiency and impartiality for the benefit of all nations, and you have the support of our delegation

Further, I seize this opportunity to convey thanks and best wishes to His Excellency Peter Thompson, former President of the General Assembly, for his hard work, commitment and leadership during the Seventy-first session.

Once again, I extend congratulations to H.E. António Guterres on his assumption to the position of Secretary General. We wish to encourage and commend his direction and guidance in steering us forward.

Mr. President

From shifting weather patterns, to global warming, to sea level rise, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale. In our region, we have witnessed the catastrophic effects of hurricanes Irma, Jose and Maria, which have undoubtedly changed forever lives in several of our Caribbean countries, leaving some islands almost uninhabitable and resulting in many untimely deaths. The recent earthquake in Mexico and the hurricane in the United States ought to be counted within the realm of the recent global disasters.

Trinidad and Tobago, which is in the southernmost part of Caribbean, was spared from the ravages of these hurricanes. It is with empathy that I extend, on behalf of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago, heartfelt condolences to our Caribbean family. We are forever mindful that, given our spirit of resilience, we will rebuild that which was lost. Trinidad and Tobago stands in solidarity and shall continue to assist with the relief efforts. However, rebuilding will require resources, as well as the cooperation and collaboration of the international community, because **we simply cannot do it alone.**

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, joins with other CARICOM Governments, in expressing our gratitude for the tremendous generosity and support provided in the face of the region's most urgent need. Our thanks and appreciation also goes out to the *Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA)*, the region's first responder. **However,**

CDEMA will need additional resources and funding to enable the organization to do even more to facilitate its immediate responses to natural disaster.

Mr. President

In the face of the recent natural catastrophes, how can anyone deny the scientific findings that climate change is real, that it is here, and it is upon us? The events of the last months in the Caribbean once more remind us all that small island developing states remain at the forefront of the impact of climate change. **We cannot, by any means, continue with the same approach as nature's fury holds no prejudice.**

Yet, in light of their categorisation as High Income Countries, on the outdated formula of GDP per capita, Caribbean countries, in their time of need, will not qualify for aid and development assistance.

Mr. President

I join my Caribbean colleagues in calling for a multidimensional approach, that takes into consideration real national needs and priorities, that takes into account these extraordinary circumstances, to provide access to development assistance, aid and debt relief, as the Caribbean region embarks on the arduous task of recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction together.

In order to achieve human and global sustainable development, we must treat with unmitigated climate change and global temperature rise as a priority issue. **Trinidad and Tobago is doing its part and** remains committed to achieving the overarching objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement.

Through our *Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)*, Trinidad and Tobago has indicated its intention to reduce its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions in its public transportation sector by 30 percent by 31st December 2030 compared to 2013 levels.

Mr. President

Trinidad and Tobago has therefore framed its national development plan for the period 2016 to 2030, titled "*Vision 2030*" with its thematic focus "*Many hearts, Many Voices, One Vision*" in keeping with Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. In this context, we have mapped our national development goals in accordance with global priorities and the SDGs. Trinidad and Tobago and the United Nations have signed the *Multi-Country Strategic Development Framework (MSDF)* in April 2017. We acknowledge and thank the UNDP for their assistance with these activities.

We are also pleased that the recently completed Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) has initiated a recalibration of the United Nations Development System (UNDS). This would better support developing countries, including SIDS, in the implementation of the programmes of action, including the SAMOA Pathway and the 2030 Agenda. In alignment with the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review and the Secretary-General's reform proposals, Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to ensuring that the United Nations Development System adopts a more flexible and tailored

approach to sustainable development assistance to assist countries in implementing the SDGs in a focused, coordinated, coherent, and cost-effective manner.

Mr. President

Oceans cover three quarters of the earth's surface and contain over 95 percent of the earth's water. It is therefore indisputable that promoting the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources is of critical importance to sustainable development and the survival of all mankind.

Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the progress achieved at the recently concluded Oceans Conference in June 2017 and the adoption of the historic Call for Action as well as commitments and actions to be taken by Member States to safeguard the health of the ocean through the implementation of SGD 14.

As a small island developing state (SIDS), Trinidad and Tobago is highly vulnerable to the unprecedented rate of loss of marine biodiversity and the impacts of unsustainable practices on the marine environment. Consequently, we welcome the adoption of the Recommendations of the Preparatory Committee established pursuant to resolution 69/292 on the development of a legally binding instrument under the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction*. Notably, this agreement will seek to address existing regulatory and legal gaps and ensure that the resources of our oceans are properly conserved and managed for the benefit of present and future generations

After having two years of the Preparatory Committee and about ten years of negotiations, we believe the time is long overdue for us to translate words into action. Trinidad and Tobago therefore looks forward to the convening of an intergovernmental conference in 2018 to consider the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee on the elements and to elaborate the text of an international legally binding instrument under the Convention.

Mr. President

The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago protects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens and residents without discrimination based on race, origin, colour, religion or sex. Our Government accords high priority to achieving gender equality, the empowerment and advancement of women which are pivotal to the achievement of the SDGs. In the words of UN Secretary General, "*Women's rights are human rights*". One cannot overstate the importance of protecting the rights of women and ensuring their full participation on an equal basis with men.

In placing women at the forefront of our development, it should be noted that a Trinidad and Tobago national is one of two women who sit on the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS), which comprise 20 members. With regard to the advancement of girls, the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago recently passed the

Miscellaneous Provisions (Marriage) Bill. This Bill provides for outlawing child marriage in Trinidad and Tobago by raising the legal age of marriage to 18 years.

Mr. President

We are currently witnessing unprecedented levels of displacement in the world. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR); approximately 65.5 million people have been forced to leave their homes. This amounts to nearly 22.5 million refugees.

Further, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago considers it important to develop ways to effectively manage migration and to take the necessary steps to enable the process of mainstreaming migration into development planning. We have therefore sought to make necessary policy changes, as well as participate in projects and training in order to develop the necessary tools to mainstream migration into development planning.

Mr. President

Trinidad and Tobago was among the 122 States which voted in favour of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which was adopted on 7 July 2017. This Treaty is particularly significant as it is the first multilateral legally binding instrument for nuclear disarmament to have been negotiated in 20 years. We look forward to the convening of the high-level conference on nuclear disarmament by 2018.

As a small island developing state, Trinidad and Tobago actively participated in the negotiations to prohibit nuclear weapons, acutely aware of the destructive force of these weapons of mass destruction to, *inter alia*, human life, the environment, food security, infrastructure and economic growth.

In view of the continued prevalence and negative effects of illegal small arms and light weapons, including the issue of curbing such weapons and its ammunition, Trinidad and Tobago has undertaken leading roles in a number of United Nations initiatives such as the Arms Trade Treaty.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has contributed significantly to violence and instability in our region. **The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) remains a key priority for Trinidad and Tobago as it seeks to regulate the illegal transfer of small arms and light weapons and ammunition.**

Mr. President

I wish to reiterate to this august body, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's unequivocal commitment and unceasing call for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. We remain optimistic that there will be a diplomatic solution to finding an end to this longstanding issue and that in good faith the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against Cuba, which significantly challenges its achievement of sustainable development, will be lifted soon.

We remain fully committed to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular, to the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-

intervention and non-interference in their internal affairs and freedom of trade and navigation.

To this end, Trinidad and Tobago consistently supports sub-regional, regional and international efforts to promote constructive dialogue to bring about the cessation, sooner rather than later, of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Mr. President

Adherence to the rule of law is important to the achievement of SDG Goal 16, which seeks to *“promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all”* as it is one of the pillars for promoting sustainable development.

Trinidad and Tobago as a democratic society adheres to the rule of law, the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and as such, we uphold the importance of the ICC to promoting the rule of law, encouraging respect for human rights and achieving sustainable peace and development, in accordance with international law and the principles of the Charter of the UN.

As a country which has been credited as one of the forefathers of the ICC through the pioneering work of the late Arthur N R Robinson, former Prime Minister and President of Trinidad and Tobago, we remain resolute in our commitment to support the mandate of the ICC and its primary objective to help put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community, as well as to prevent such heinous crimes.

Mr. President

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago is particularly pleased with your decision in this 72nd session to focus on *“people: striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet”*. We believe that these concerns and issues are timely and necessary, especially as we are faced with increasing humanitarian challenges, threats to international peace and security, as well as the environment. In harmony with the global vision for multilateralism, we are committed to working together collectively to find enduring and sustainable solutions to global disparities, poverty, rising inequality, protracted conflicts and other challenges facing the world today.

We must all do our part in this noble endeavor for the good of humanity!

Thank you.

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