

**REMARKS DELIVERED BY
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE DENNIS MOSES, MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS ON THE OCCASION OF
COLOMBIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY
WEDNESDAY JULY 25TH, 2018**

It is indeed an honour to be here this evening to extend on behalf of Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister, and the Government and people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago congratulatory greetings on the occasion of the 208th Anniversary of Independence of the Republic of Colombia.

Your Excellency, today as we celebrate this milestone occasion of more than two centuries of independence, I take the opportunity to reflect on Colombia's rich historical journey in attaining freedom and the legacy of your nation's great leaders and patriots. On this note, Colombia is to be congratulated for the conduct of the elections held in May and June of this year at which His Excellency Iván Duque Márquez was elected the President of Colombia. This is testimony to the democracy which exists in Colombia.

Trinidad and Tobago and Colombia have enjoyed a cordial relationship since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1968. The reopening of the Embassy of Colombia in Port of Spain in 2012 has served over the years as a catalyst in strengthening our bilateral collaboration and fostering a deeper relationship between

our nations and peoples. In this regard, I wish to highlight the success of Colombia's Cooperation Strategy with the Caribbean Basin and the significance of this initiative in promoting technical cooperation in the areas of security, agriculture and education, in particular, language training.

Allow me to also place on record Trinidad and Tobago's deep appreciation to the Government of Colombia for the invaluable offer of the Foreign Language Courses which have benefitted the Public Servants of this country. I note that the Third Edition of this initiative concluded last month and I am advised that sixty-one (61) participants graduated. Your Excellency, there is no doubt that the successful implementation of this initiative was as a result of the impetus provided by your good self and we remain grateful for your efforts.

Your Excellency, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the benefits of such programmes in improving the ties between our nations and enhancing mutual understanding of our unique cultures. The continued interest of the Government of Colombia in promoting this understanding demonstrates clearly the value attached to our bilateral relationship.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, beyond our technical cooperation, I am pleased to note that Colombia is Trinidad and Tobago's largest trading partner in the Americas after the United States of America.

In this regard, I am pleased to acknowledge that our countries are engaged in exploratory discussions towards the negotiation of a Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection of Investment Agreement. Among the other current initiatives is the ongoing collaboration to pursue a high level Trade Mission to Colombia in September 2018. It is hoped that this Mission will expand our trade relationship and increase the commercial linkages to the mutual benefit of both nations.

Your Excellency, as I conclude, I wish to commend you on your personal commitment and enthusiasm to advancing our bilateral agenda. I wish to reiterate the significance Trinidad and Tobago attaches to its relations with Colombia and to reaffirm our commitment to deepening and enhancing these bilateral ties.

It is therefore an honour and a pleasure on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and on my own behalf, to extend best wishes once again to the Government and to the people of Colombia on your National Day. I ask you to raise your glasses as we toast to the Government and people of Colombia on this celebratory occasion.

I thank you.