

**Statement to be delivered at the Special Permanent Council Meeting on the
Commemoration of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2018**

Thursday August 09, 2018 at 10:00 a.m.

At the outset, the Permanent Mission of Trinidad and Tobago wishes to express its appreciation to Ambassador Nestor Mendez, Assistant Secretary General, and his team for leading the efforts of the Organisation of American States to commemorate the 2018 Inter-American Week for Indigenous Peoples. The series of activities, from the Art Exhibition, awareness tour of the US National Museum of the American Indian, tomorrow's Inter-American Forum and this Special Permanent Council Meeting have brought much needed attention to the contributions of Indigenous Peoples to the history and development of the Americas. I wish to also extend gratitude to Mr. Chartier, Mr. Huertas, Mr. Tacuri, leaders of Indigenous peoples in Canada, Panama and Peru respectively as well as Mr. Botero of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights for enlightening the Council with your presentations this morning.

The Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago are pleased to collaborate and contribute to the events this week and highlight our very own Indigenous Groups including the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community, Partners for First Peoples Development and Warao Nation of Trinidad and Tobago. It is noteworthy that these Communities and the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts are also commemorating this very occasion for which we are gathered today.

Under the theme of today's commemorative day, "Indigenous Peoples' Migration and Movement", I wish to highlight the measures undertaken by successive Administrations of the Government in Trinidad and Tobago to ensure and protect the continued preservation of the historical legacy and revitalization of the Indigenous peoples, their cultural heritage, systems and traditions. These activities include:

- The annual Day of Recognition, celebrated on October 14 every year to mark the contributions of Warrior Chief Hyarima and the presence of Indigenous Peoples;
- The celebration of a national holiday on October 13, 2017 at the close of the annual First Peoples Heritage Week in 2017;
- The allocation of twenty-five acres of land in 2014 for the establishment of a Model Amerindian Village;
- The submission of a list of sites deemed 'sacred sites' by the three (3) indigenous groups to the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago and
- This year, in 2018, Partners for First Peoples' Development will be hosting their Annual Indigenous Food Fair 2018 on August 12 which is geared towards fostering, reclaiming and continuing to educate about the cultural heritage of the First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago.

In addition, Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, announced further activities during the 2017 celebrations including:

- The updating of school books, through the establishment of a refereed and published history of the people of Trinidad and Tobago;
- The commitment of additional lands allocated to the First Peoples;

- The conduct of a ceremonial burial for the remains unearthed at the Red House, the home of Trinidad and Tobago's Parliament as well as
- The establishment of a suitable monument which will be erected on the grounds of the Red House.

During this year, the Indigenous community suffered a great loss for which I wish to acknowledge and extend condolences. This is the passing of Santa Rosa Queen, Mrs. Jennifer Cassar, who the people of Trinidad and Tobago bade farewell to on July 27 of this year and whose burial and remembrance rites were undertaken by the Santa Rosa First Peoples.

In closing, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to promoting and protecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples as agreed to under the framework of the United Nations and this Organization of American States. These commitments solely serve to reiterate rights enshrined in the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago to its citizens and which are vigorously pursued by actions undertaken by the Government and guided by international frameworks.

I thank you.