

**Statement delivered by Ms. Reita Toussaint, Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, at the Reception in commemoration of the 69<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China, September 21, 2018**

Good evening.

I wish to extend apologies on behalf of Senator the Honourable Dennis Moses, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, who regrettably is still at the Senate. I read this statement on his behalf.

It is my distinct pleasure to extend best wishes to the Chinese Government and People on the 69<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China on behalf of Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

On the cusp of turning three score and ten as a nation, the People's Republic of China stands out among the global family of nations as an economic powerhouse and an advocate for fellow developing countries. China has made great strides but, more importantly, has great potential for advancement, particularly in building upon historic strengths in innovation and manufacturing. The Chinese people have a lot of which to be proud.

I imagine that when a few of those people first made that lengthy journey by sea in 1806 to forge a new life in Trinidad and Tobago, they would not have

envisioned laying the groundwork for a sustained and prosperous relationship between both countries. Since reinforcing that affiliation almost forty-five (45) years ago with the establishment of diplomatic relations, both Trinidad and Tobago and China have pledged to deepen and expand our friendship.

The last twelve (12) months were no different – in fact, they marked an intensification of those efforts. In April of this year, Trinidad and Tobago appointed its new Ambassador to China, His Excellency Stephen Seedansingh Jr. While that was a significant development, the pinnacle of that period was the Official Visit to the People’s Republic of China by Prime Minister Rowley in May on the invitation of His Excellency Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council. As a member of the Prime Minister’s delegation, Minister Moses attested to the success of that Visit, not only in furthering tangible bilateral cooperation but also in building political trust at the highest levels.

During the Official Visit, the Prime Minister impressed upon his counterpart the need for a paradigm shift in the bilateral economic relationship toward equity ownership, a departure from the usual loan financing provided by the Chinese Government. The Prime Minister also took the opportunity to promote Trinidad and Tobago as a springboard for Chinese business activities in the region based on our advantageous location. Through meetings with the relevant stakeholders, opportunities were explored for collaboration in security, air services, tourism and infrastructure, among other areas.

It was also on that Visit that Trinidad and Tobago became the first Caribbean participant in the Belt and Road Initiative, which seeks to connect China with Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean through, inter alia, transportation routes and trade and financial alliances. Other key agreements were finalised in the fields of health, human resource development and economic and technical cooperation.

Ambassador, I am pleased to report that the Official Visit has already started to pay dividends. Terms are currently being negotiated for the development of an Industrial Estate at Phoenix Park, and a Dry Dock at La Brea. In June of this year, Lake Asphalt appointed Beijing Construction Engineering Group as a distributor of its products. Other important initiatives are expected to be pursued in the short term.

The Visit also gave momentum to an already vibrant partnership between Trinidad and Tobago and China. Since May, there have been two (2) High-level Exchange visits, with another carded for November 2018 when Trinidad and Tobago will participate in the China International Import Exposition (CIIE), a major trade event being hosted in Shanghai.

The boost to our bilateral relations has not been at the expense of engagement in the larger regional and multilateral contexts. Last November, Tobago was represented at the highest level at the China-Latin America and the Caribbean International Exposition in Zhuhai, and earlier this month, Trinidad and Tobago participated at the Ministerial level in the inaugural conference between China and the Caribbean on anti-corruption law enforcement held in Grenada. Trinidad and Tobago and China also maintain

a working relationship at international organisations such as the United Nations and lent support, where suitable, to each other's candidatures.

As I close, I wish to state that the progress of the last year proved that much could be achieved through dialogue, teamwork and action. Ambassador, I look forward to your continued commitment to ensure that we accomplish even more over the next year.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us toast to the Government and People of the People's Republic of China on the 69<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China.

Thank you.