

**MESSAGE OF THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ON THE OCCASION OF  
UNITED NATIONS DAY 2018, MARKING THE 73<sup>RD</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

Today, United Nations Day 2018, is a fitting occasion on which to reflect on the journey of the United Nations (UN) since its establishment on 24 October 1945 and on the future of the organisation. As the UN turns seventy-three (73), I am pleased to bring greetings in recognition of this milestone and to place the spotlight on the important contribution and enduring relevance of the premier multilateral organisation.

In a complex global context where longstanding challenges are often compounded by emerging ones, the UN has demonstrated remarkable resilience and has proven itself as a time-tested mechanism for joint action by the international community. From protracted conflicts to outbreaks of infectious disease; from the existential threat of climate change to the grinding reality of famine, the UN, its near-universal membership of 193 Member States and various non-State actors have embraced multilateralism as the cornerstone of their approach to common challenges and goals.

The UN enables the erosion of asymmetries of power among States since it is built on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Member States, irrespective of their size or development status. As a trusty arbiter, facilitator and partner, the UN remains an indispensable platform for meaningful dialogue and collaboration within the international community. Its very existence has transformed the international landscape so that unilateralism, once a commonplace feature, now stands out as an incongruous aberration.

The UN does much more than affirm such lofty ideals and ambitious aspirations as dignity, well-being, equality and a sustainable future for all. The global body mobilises and unifies States around these ideals and aspirations, facilitating the elaboration and implementation of practical steps towards their achievement. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and associated 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development bear testimony to the power of the UN not only to inspire shared hopes and dreams, but also to galvanise all States into practical complementary actions towards achieving them.

As it seeks to be equal to current and future demands, and in the face of criticism, the United Nations has amply demonstrated its maturity and its robustness. Today, through its bold and wide-ranging reform agenda, the UN is endeavouring to effect a quantum leap in the ability of the organisation to meet the needs of its diverse membership. The reform plan, which was accepted by UN Member States earlier this year, places sustainable development at the centre of the UN. It emphasises national ownership of development, as well as tailored support from the UN System for national priorities. At the very heart of the reform effort is strengthened resolve to make a real difference in the life of the ordinary man.

People-centred sustainable development also lies at the heart of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's Vision 2030 National Development Strategy, which was formulated in alignment with the 2030 Agenda while prioritising the particular needs and challenges of the people of our nation and region. As such, the bold changes to the UN approach to development augur well for the future of the relationship between the Government and People of Trinidad and Tobago and the UN agencies stationed here.

Since 1961, a number of UN agencies have maintained a physical presence in Trinidad and Tobago and have contributed in myriad ways to national development efforts. Many of the milestones reached in Trinidad and Tobago in such areas as poverty reduction, education, climate change resilience, disaster preparedness, human rights, good governance and citizen security have been achieved in part through resources, capacity building and technical support provided by the UN. The UN System in Trinidad and Tobago has collaborated with Government Ministries, agencies and other entities over the decades to strengthen policy and programme delivery at the national level. Though the work of UN personnel usually takes place outside of the limelight, it is important to express gratitude for the tangible ways in which this country has benefited from their contribution. Their input has informed and bolstered national development efforts and their track record already illustrates the sensitivity to national priorities that is a critical element of the UN's reform plan. The future of our collaboration in the best interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago looks bright.

Even as Government prioritises the needs of the people of Trinidad and Tobago, membership of the UN reminds us of our shared responsibility as part of an interconnected community of

nations to safeguard the dignity, well-being and humanity of all. In the context of escalating levels of need arising out of conflict, transnational crime, terrorism, natural disasters and chronic poverty, Trinidad and Tobago cannot and will not stand aloof as the global community confronts these pressing contemporary global challenges. This country has built a strong legacy of leadership and partnership at the UN in respect of international criminal justice, gender equality, non-communicable diseases, the effort to address climate change, disarmament, regulation of the international trade in conventional weapons, conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity and vulnerability of small island developing States (SIDS) to exogenous shocks. For all its shortcomings, and because of its resilience and capacity for reinvention, the UN remains a unique and critical platform for managing the interplay between national priorities and global partnership in pursuit of shared goals.

The passing of Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, earlier this year provided a peerless opportunity for reflection on his firm belief in the indispensability of the UN, his frankness about its limitations and his commitment to revitalising the organisation to make it more relevant to the common man.

May the 73<sup>rd</sup> year since the establishment of the UN continue to be a year of reflection, frank and constructive assessment, revitalisation, renewed commitment and celebration of what the organisation has achieved to date. On this UN Day 2018, I extend heartfelt congratulations and thanks to UN Secretary-General António Guterres and to UN personnel stationed here and across the globe for their invaluable contributions towards the improvement of the lives of ordinary people worldwide and their commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind.

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