



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT

by

The Honourable Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, S.C., MP

Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

at the

69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

United Nations, New York
September 26, 2014

Mr President

Secretary General

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PRESIDENT

I begin by congratulating you Mr President, on your election to preside over the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Your election comes at a time when we are about to commence the second phase in the elaboration of the Post 2015 development agenda, which I am confident, as I am sure we all are, that you will administer and lead with distinction.

I also thank and congratulate His Excellency John Ash, of Antigua and Barbuda. During his tenure as President he laid the foundation and set the conditions for the elaboration of a new development agenda geared towards influencing the sustainable development of Members of this Assembly.

INTRODUCTION

It is a great privilege to address you today and share the perspectives of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago on our priorities for the delivery and implementation of a "*transformative Post-2105 Development Agenda*" in accordance with the theme aptly selected by you Mr. President.

Last year, we considered how we would set the stage to begin the process to be launched during this 69th session on finalisation of the Post 2015 development agenda.

On that occasion I noted that, with the adoption of the Millennium Declaration and the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals, a new chapter was opened for the United Nations.

This chapter would see the UN positioned as a vehicle to assist developing countries, especially the most vulnerable, in their efforts to help reduce poverty and hunger, and provide an enabling environment to assist States to develop their economies so that their people could rise out of persistent poverty.

Measures must be put in place to spur a proactive rather than reactive approach to the issue of development.

Fourteen years later, with the experience of challenges and lessons the MDGs implementation, we are now at a critical juncture in operationalising the elements that we agreed to at Rio+20 would, so that they can constitute the Future We Want.

The current model was built on what we agreed to at the Millennium Summit and has fallen short of the expectations of many developing countries, including Trinidad and Tobago, which has surpassed some of the MDG targets.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has been able to achieve this objective because it forms an integral part of our Medium Term Policy Framework 2011. We have incorporated and aligned the MDGs and their targets with Trinidad and Tobago's medium -term national priorities.

Consequently, some of the goals, targets and indicators were modified in the light of Trinidad and Tobago's' unique development circumstances and achievement of several of the MDGs. This approach resulted in, for example, modified targets for Education with the pursuit of universal early childhood education and a 60 percent participation rate at tertiary education by 2015.

I am delighted to tell you that on both counts, we have surpassed our targets – with universal pre-school education on course for 2015, and with a new tertiary participation rate of over 65 percent.

I am also pleased to underscore that my country is well poised to achieve 70 percent of the 43 targets across 8 goals which are considered to be relevant to the national context. This percentage comprises 42 percent of targets which have already been met and 28 percent which are likely to be met by 2015.

With good success, and lessons learnt, our work is therefore cut out for us.

CARICOM DEVELOPMENT

Mr. President, as part of the global community, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the outcomes of the various milestones in the process that we have achieved to date.

As a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Trinidad and Tobago was an active participant in the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS).

We were therefore witness to the sweeping and unprecedented global participation and interest in that process and its outcome.

As a collective effort, the crafting of the sustainable development goals undoubtedly captured the spirit of openness, inclusiveness and partnership which must underpin this new phase of policy design and implementation.

Along with the report of the Inter-Governmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing, the seventeen (17) sustainable development goals adopted in July of this year form a solid foundation.

It is my considered view that, in delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda we should prioritise key issues for this session of the United Nations General Assembly.

THE FOUR PRIORITIES

This first priority is for us to renew our commitment to achieving the MDGs.

Even in the one year we have remaining, we can advance our original objectives to a greater extent with more dedicated effort.

As the MDG Gap Task Force Report highlights, although progress has been made in some areas, gains must be accelerated and a renewed effort is required in some areas to close the glaring gaps that continue to exist.

Some of these gaps include access to affordable essential medicines in health and long term debt sustainability, in particular for small States, as an essential element of the global partnership for sustainable development.

Implementation will be a key measure of our commitment to the aspirations for the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

Operationalising the future we want

In the Rio+20 Conference in 2012 we agreed on many of the foundation elements of the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

We now have:

- The Secretary General's Global Sustainability Report;
- The Sustainable Development Goals;
- The Report of the Inter-Governmental Committee on Sustainable Development Financing, and
- Outcomes of the structured dialogues on a Specialised Technology Mechanism and the 10 year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The Future We Want also outlines some key emerging challenges which we must urgently address in the context of the Post 2015 development agenda.

Some of these issues as you would recall include non-communicable diseases, the increasing urgency to address climate change and the imperative of addressing the needs of marginalised groups including women, youth and persons living with disabilities.

These building blocks of the future we want form the basis for the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

Together with the institutional support of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, the reformed Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Environmental Assembly, we have a solid foundation for the fashioning of a global partnership in support of **poverty eradication** through sustainable development.

We look forward to the synthesized report of the Secretary General which should place all of these elements in the context of a fully integrated Post 2015 Development Agenda and give due consideration to the needs of countries in special situations including Small Island Developing States, Least Developed Countries, Land-locked Developing Countries and Africa.

As a specialised Conference mandated in the Future We Want, the outcome document of the recently concluded ***Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States***, the S.A.M.O.A Pathway, should also be appropriately addressed in the Report of the Secretary General.

The third priority is for us to revitalise the Global Partnership in support of Sustainable Development.

The report of the Inter Governmental Committee of Experts on Financing for Sustainable Development have highlighted that "current financing and investment patterns will not deliver sustainable development".

In fact it goes on to say that "while design and implementation of policies will be on the national level, achieving sustainable development will require international support and cooperation". \

These are the core pre-requisites for a global partnership in support of sustainable development. However, in order make such a partnership meaningful, it must include:

- **Reform** in the International Financial Institutions targeting systemic failures and focusing on building resilience which sustain growth in open and vulnerable economies; and
- Successful **completion to the Doha round** of Trade negotiations which will ensure that the rules of trade and commerce do not continue to operate so as to slow, impede or negate development gains and aspirations in small vulnerable economies.

The Third International Conference on Financing for Development to take place in July 2015 will be critically important for ensuring that a meaningful and effective global partnership for development will become a reality for the implementation of the Post 2015 Development Agenda.

On the point of a revitalised global partnership in support of sustainable development I would wish to strongly reiterate the support Trinidad and Tobago for an end to the economic embargo against Cuba.

The perpetuation of these measures against a developing country undermine our collective aspirations for a Post 2015 development agenda where no one is left behind.

And the fourth priority for us is to address the mitigation gap for achieving the below 2 degrees or 1.5 degrees Celsius target for limiting the increase in global greenhouse gas emissions and achieving an ambitious legally binding agreement on climate change in 2015 to be applied from 2020.

This agreement should set the world on track to achieving carbon neutrality by 2070, and by so doing, ensure that the global climate will support the sustainable development of present as well as future generations.

Our collective action on climate change should take into account the survival of the most vulnerable States, in particular Small Island Developing States as the front line of increasingly severe impacts of climate change.

It should also be firmly rooted in the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, recognising that developing countries' finance needs for mitigation and adaptation to climate change cannot be met exclusively from domestic resources given the competing demands on public finance.

The early operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund is therefore essential. It is my hope that the partnerships and announcements made at the UN Climate Summit last Tuesday will serve to catalyse more ambitious action on climate change in the near and long-term and build the momentum necessary for a successful Conference of the Parties in Lima in December and in Paris in 2015.

Mr. President, these are the elements of the global framework which should occupy our full attention and commitment over the course of this session of the United Nations General Assembly.

These elements will be supported by critical enabling actions at the regional and national levels.

In the context of the Caribbean Community we have been doing our part as a sub-region of small island and low lying developing States to foster regional integration in support of the sustainable development of all of our peoples.

CARICOM Heads of State and Government have agreed on the vision of "a Caribbean Community that is integrated, inclusive and resilient; driven by knowledge, excellence, innovation and productivity. A Community where every citizen is secure and has the opportunity to realise his or her potential with guaranteed human rights and social justice; and can contribute to, and share in, its economic, social and cultural prosperity. A Community which is a unified and competitive force in the global arena".

This vision is the collective ambition of the Member States of the Caribbean Community agreed in the context of a Strategic Framework Plan for the period 2015-2019. This plan will be operationalised through the implementation of six (6) integrated strategic priorities which include building economic, social, environmental and technological resilience through a coordinated foreign policy and research and development innovation.

In support of the implementation of these six (6) priorities CARICOM Heads of State and Government have also called for a Post 2015 Development Agenda which focuses on:

- The eradication of poverty as a central pillar;
- Adopting a people-centred approach through an inter-Governmentally agreed agenda, and
- An agenda which incorporates broader measures and appropriate approaches and criteria to complement GDP per capita as a measure of development.

Importantly, these broader measures must foster an enabling global policy environment that is "more conducive to the achievement of development objectives, and affords greater policy coherence across institutions including those in the areas of trade, finance, environment and development".

And Mr President, these regional initiatives in support of advancing the sustainable development of the people of the Caribbean Community are being designed and implemented in the context of a broader strategy for mitigating the vulnerability inherent in countries as small and open as ours.

In a context of limited exports and a narrow resource base the focus is on nurturing and developing our human resources through an emphasis on innovation and entrepreneurship.

It is an approach which focuses the full realisation of human right to development and a life of dignity.

Consistent with this approach, the region continues to advance the global cause of truth, justice, and reconciliation, within the context of reparatory justice for the victims and the descendants of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

As a region we are determined to engage in reparatory dialogue with the former slave owning European Nations in order to address the living legacies of these crimes.

This is a critically vital element of the socio-economic development aspirations of the region as the victims of these crimes and their descendants were left in a state of social, psychological, economic and cultural deprivation.

In addition, they have been left in a state of disenfranchisement that has ensured their suffering and debilitation today, and from which only reparatory action can alleviate their suffering.

Sustainable development cannot be achieved in an environment where people are denied their basic rights to live free from fear; with daily

deprivation of the necessities of life due to the ravages of war and other types of instability.

It is for these reasons, Mr. President, Trinidad and Tobago is concerned by the developments occurring in Ukraine and other parts of the globe which has caused pain and suffering to hundreds of innocent victims. They too must be allowed to live freely.

At the same time we note with grave concern the continued failure to find a lasting solution to the decades-old Arab Israeli conflict which caused tremendous loss of life and destruction of property in the Gaza Strip, and left emotional and psychological scars to those families who lost almost two thousand of their loved ones.

Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the negotiation of the two-State solution as the preferred means to bring lasting peace to the region so that the people of Palestine so long denied their rightful place in the international community can live in larger freedom with their Israeli brothers and sisters.

To this end, we also call for the implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions geared towards resolution of the conflict and the lifting of the illegal embargo imposed on the Palestinian people since 2005.

Likewise Mr President, we remain optimistic that the resolution adopted by the Security Council at Wednesday's Summit on, "Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorists acts", would be the catalyst for greater international cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

You will all agree that terrorism has and continues to undermine the sovereignty, territorial integrity and peace and security of the peoples of the Middle East and further afield.

Members of this Assembly will also recall that in my inaugural address to this body in September, 2010, I indicated that the time was right for the adoption of a treaty to regulate the international trade in conventional arms.

It is now history that the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) has been adopted and after yesterday's High Level Treaty Event now has the requisite number of States Parties for its entry into force, which is likely to be on December 25 of this year.

Entry into force of the ATT will require States Parties to make important decisions to implement the provisions of the Treaty at the First Conference

of States Parties which is likely to be convened by mid-2015. One of these decisions is on the location of the Secretariat of the ATT.

Over a year ago, my country announced its candidature to have the ATT Secretariat located in Port of Spain.

This bid has been endorsed by all CARICOM States and has so far received the support from a number of States from diverse regions.

The hosting of this important body in a region which is disproportionately affected by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and its association with other trans-boundary crimes, such as drug trafficking is a significant development.

It will assist in the full and effective implementation of the Treaty, and contribute to the reduction, if not elimination of illegal weapons in the hands of criminals whose actions continue to threaten the sustainable development of our region.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to providing the necessary resources to host the Secretariat, and this has been transmitted to all Members of the United Nations.

Once more I call on all those States which have not as yet announced their support for our candidature to do so and ensure that the principle of equitable geographic distribution in the location of major global bodies is observed. No country or region must continue to have a monopoly in hosting important institutions which are established for the benefit of all.

Mr. President, Trinidad and Tobago is satisfied that among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the General Assembly on December 10, 2014, is Goal 3 on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages.

The health and well-being of our people is critical to ensuring productive lifestyles which are critical to sustainable economic growth and achieving a transformative Post 2015 Development Agenda.

Health and well-being is one of the ten thematic areas of development identified by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

It will be recalled that CARICOM was largely responsible for calling the attention of the General Assembly to adopt a resolution to focus attention of the effects of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as a major contributor to human mortality.

Nevertheless, while we continue to make strides in tackling the incidence of NCDs, we are cognisant of the need to combat the spread of infectious diseases within our region and in different regions which threaten the survival of people in many nations.

It is for these reasons, Mr. President that we commend the Security Council for adopting resolution 2177, which was co-sponsored by Trinidad and Tobago and other non-members of the Council on the Ebola virus disease.

This resolution which witnessed the unanimous support of all permanent Members of the Council should be emulated in other areas where the Council acts on matters related to international peace and security under Chapter VII of the Charter of the UN.

Simultaneously, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon must also be complimented for hosting yesterday's Summit on the Ebola virus disease where members pledged to take action at the global and regional levels to combat the spread of Ebola to supplement the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response.

Trinidad and Tobago remains committed in playing its part in eradicating infectious diseases which undermine the health and well-being of all peoples.

It is for this reason that prior to the passage of Resolution 2177, as Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, I wrote to the Secretary-General of CARICOM requesting that a meeting of Member States of the Community be convened to discuss and agree on sustainable policy responses at both the national and regional levels concerning public health issues, including Chikungunya and the Ebola virus.

Finally Mr President, you can be assured of the support of the Government of Trinidad & Tobago in assisting the United Nations in shaping a transformative post 2015 development agenda.

Our support will come not only through our representation in the various organs of this global institution, but also by continuing to adopt policies at the national level which are geared towards putting people at the centre of all developmental objectives.

Any development agenda which alienates the people or places people at the periphery and not the centre is not sustainable and is doomed to failure.

Such failure stands against the commitment we have all made and the purpose we serve at this conference.

Our work is cut out for all of us and together, we can achieve our goals.

We **MUST** achieve our goals.

I thank you.