



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT BY

DR. THE HONOURABLE KEITH ROWLEY,

PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE

OF THE

SEVENTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Mr. President,

It is an honour to address this august Assembly of States, at this 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I stand before you on behalf of a proud nation, which is celebrating the leadership of the General Assembly for the next year by a son of the soil of Trinidad and Tobago. We are proud of you Mr. President. I again extend warmest congratulations to you on behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and you are assured of our full support. I also wish to express our deepest gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Csaba Kőrösi for ably guiding our work during the 77th session.

Permit me Mr. President to express our deepest condolences to and solidarity with the Government and People of Morocco as well as the Government and People of Libya on the recent tragedies, which have resulted in the significant loss of lives, livelihoods and destruction of property.

Mr. President,

At the midpoint of the journey for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, a sober reflection

would leave many observers with a pessimistic feeling that the world is in peril, and that we are at risk of significantly falling short of ensuring that “no one is left behind”. We have seen an array of cascading crises in many parts of the world. Recently, the Secretary General sounded the alarm that the period of “global warming” had ended, and that the era of “global boiling” had arrived. Investments in instruments of war have far surpassed investments in instruments of peace and peacebuilding. Some protracted conflicts are continuing with little signs of ceasefire, and others continue to erupt and escalate, with disturbing consequences, all of these contribute to the waning spirit of multilateralism in our United Nations, the very purpose for which this organization was built.

We have seen glimmers of hope extinguished by the darkness of despair, where the most vulnerable of the global population are made to pay the highest price. The cards of the international financial system remain heavily stacked against the **Global South**, thereby inhibiting the prospects of these countries to achieve economic growth and sustainable development. Against this backdrop, Mr. President, I ask; is this the legacy that we would leave for future generations?

Mr President,

Trinidad and Tobago, as a responsible member of this organisation, is committed to doing its part to achieve sustainable development and international peace and security for all. However, our ability to safely navigate our destiny to the harbour of sustainable development by 2030 is stymied by challenges and threats, some of which are existential. One such threat is the proliferation and use of illegal firearms in our society, which, just like in other jurisdictions, bring untold suffering to many families and communities and the nation as a whole. Mr President, this situation has worsened largely because of the accelerated commercial availability coupled with illegal trafficking from countries of manufacture into the almost defenceless territories of the Caribbean. In a population of 1.4 million people Trinidad and Tobago experienced over 600 murders last year, 90% of which involved handguns and increasingly, assault weapons. Within our best efforts and a huge consumption of our already scarce resources, we have seen over 400 violent firearms-driven killings already this year. This is a crisis shared by almost all the Caribbean territories and is to be added to the challenges that stand in the way of any successful tackling of the Development Goals already identified.

Mr. President,

Trinidad and Tobago, both individually and as part of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), has attempted to devise solutions and interventions to address these challenges meaningfully and holistically. For this reason, earlier this year Trinidad and Tobago hosted the CARICOM Regional Symposium to address Crime and Violence as a Public Health Issue, as we felt that it was incumbent to promote and encourage dialogue aimed at reducing violence and preventing crime in our society. In this context, we are cognizant of the need for cooperation at all levels. Accordingly, Trinidad and Tobago remains fully committed to the Arms Trade Treaty and its stated objectives. We also look forward to continue to work collaboratively with our regional and international partners, especially the United States, to urgently stem the illicit trade of illegal firearms, most of which are produced by gun manufacturers and promoters based in this country. We acknowledge and appreciate the recent and ongoing support of the United States in linking arms with Trinidad and Tobago and the wider CARICOM in confronting this metastasizing scourge which not only disturbs our safety but threatens our sense of security and even the very democratic states themselves.

Mr. President,

We acknowledge that the proliferation of violent crime, concomitant with other escalating crises, provides fertile conditions to destabilize any country. It is in this context that Trinidad and Tobago supports CARICOM's position that all nations respect the Caribbean Sea as a **Zone of Peace**. Consequently, Trinidad and Tobago, as it fights its own battle in this area, remains deeply concerned over the developments in our fellow CARICOM country, Haiti, that are causing unimaginable humanitarian socio-economic, and security consequences. We applaud the decision of the Government of Kenya to offer to help lead a multinational unit in Haiti and welcome the decision of the Governments of The Bahamas and Jamaica to contribute personnel to it. Rwanda's offer to help is also very significant and commendable.

We also urge the international community to collaborate with Haiti towards the achievement of a credible solution to its current crisis that would guarantee that the country and its People are not left behind. I recall the exhortation by Trinidad and Tobago's iconic calypsonian David Rudder in his timeless classic "Haiti I'm Sorry" where he intoned;

"I refuse to believe that we good people would forever turn our hearts and eyes away; Haiti I'm sorry, we misunderstood you, one

day we'll turn our heads and look inside you." That day has come. That day is now. We the united nations gathered here must prioritize authorization for the external help that Haiti desperately needs.

Mr. President,

Just like anywhere else in the world, **Haiti deserves Peace! Haiti deserves Prosperity! Haiti deserves Progress and Haiti deserves Sustainability! Haiti requires the intervention of the United Nations now!**

I wish to assure you that Trinidad and Tobago, as an honest broker, remains fully committed to working with the Government of Haiti and all other stakeholders to arrive at an indigenous solution to comprehensively address the crisis in that country.

Mr. President,

Trinidad and Tobago is of the view that in order to rebuild trust and reignite global solidarity, there must be universal adherence to the **Charter of the United Nations** and International Law. Respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states must be paramount and permanent. It is in this connection that we continue to register our dismay

and disappointment in the ongoing hostilities following the military action against Ukraine.

Mr. President,

Though we are geographically far removed from the threat of the conflict, we are not unaffected. It is indeed disappointing that the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which assisted in stabilizing global food prices and potentially protecting millions from the threat of famine and starvation has been terminated. We noted with great anxiety that global food prices during the month of July rose for the first time in months. This situation is of priority concern for the CARICOM Community as we acknowledge that food security remains a crucial issue for our region and is a vital component in our quest to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

Mr. President,

It is also regrettable that after all this time a credible solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains elusive. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago reiterates its strong support for a two-state solution based on mutual understanding, tolerance and respect which would serve as a foundation for Israel and Palestine to live as peaceful responsible neighbours. We continue to urge both sides to recommit to a just, lasting

and comprehensive solution that would ensure peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability for all.

Mr. President,

2023 marks two very important milestones for the international community, as we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute.

As a country that has been a longstanding advocate of the International Criminal Court, Trinidad and Tobago congratulates the Court on this achievement. In recognizing this milestone, we remember and pay tribute to an outstanding pioneer of the Court, the late Arthur N. R. Robinson, former Prime Minister and President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. We have seen sufficient evidence to be convinced that his efforts, which in part resulted in the creation of the ICC, were not in vain. For this reason, Trinidad and Tobago remains steadfast in its support of the work and mandate of the Court, as we believe that access to justice is a critical element towards achieving sustainable peace.

We therefore continue to urge those countries that have not done so, to submit to the jurisdiction of the ICC, so that it can comprehensively fulfil its mandate as a truly universal Court.

Mr. President,

While we acknowledge that the ICC provides a beacon of hope for access to justice, we also recognize that it is an absolute injustice that seventy-five years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there still exists discrimination and a lack of tolerance for fundamental human rights. We remain concerned that in some quarters, women and girls continue to be denied similar opportunities offered to men and boys which stymies the collective pursuit to building peaceful and sustainable societies. It is quite paradoxical, Mr. President, that we are attempting to achieve the 2030 Agenda while leaving substantial segments of our communities behind. Everyone must be allowed to live a life free of fear and free from all forms of violence; a life in which they are respected, where their dignity and liberty are not compromised.

These ideals must also shape the way forward for reconciliation, truth and justice. The persistent under-development of Caribbean nations and so many others is directly attributed to the unpaid debt for centuries of enslavement and economic exploitation of African people by

Europeans. The descendants of these people populate the Caribbean islands where they struggle manfully against the residual rigours of these historic crimes even as they are visited by the worst effects of climate change and the constant threat of exclusion from the world's mainstream financial systems. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago continues to call for bold decisive action to ensure reparatory justice for the untold suffering of millions of people in the developing world. We would welcome Africa's support in this quest for justice.

Mr. President,

It is undeniable that climate change is an existential threat to all of us and does not recognize geographical boundaries. We also acknowledge that our people, the people of small island developing states, those who bear the least culpability for the climate crisis are the ones who continue to be most disproportionately affected. The experts have told us that this past July was the hottest month on record and that global ocean temperatures were also at record levels. Most disconcertingly, we noted with justifiable alarm the recent dire warning by scientists that without ambitious climate action, we will exceed the critical 1.5 degrees Celsius temperature threshold. However, recent developments have shown that over ambitious net-zero targets ought not to be forced upon small island nations.

Mr. President,

As we are called upon to be game changers, on this issue we have a responsibility for the survival and continued existence of life on this planet that no other generation of leaders has had.

A Global Stocktake at COP28 is crucial. The GST must result in a road map that brings the world nearer to the track by ensuring that NDCs are aligned with the 1.5-degree temperature goal. Nationally determined contributions must become nationally implemented contributions. Trinidad and Tobago is in the process of implementing its commitment to installing some infrastructure for sustainable energy supply.

We urge developed countries to increase their support for the second replenishment of the Green Climate Fund. If these commitments were to be honoured in full, sooner rather than later, they would go a long way towards rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity, particularly for the Global South.

Mr. President,

The global economic crisis has landed heavily on the developing world, with Small Island Developing States (SIDS), such as Trinidad and

Tobago and our Caribbean neighbours, facing the harshest impacts of the socioeconomic fallout.

For this reason, the next 10-year programme of action will be crucial to ensuring that no one is left behind. We call on the international community to lend its support for the Fourth International Conference on SIDS, and to reach an ambitious and transformative global blueprint that will drive the sustainable development ambitions of SIDS towards long-term resilient prosperity.

We will also continue to advocate that international financial institutions should be sensitive to the specific circumstances of developing countries, and the challenges that they face. Trinidad and Tobago therefore reiterates its support for the development of a **Multidimensional Vulnerability Index**, the **Bridgetown Initiative** and any other effort that addresses the most pressing needs of developing countries, including those encountering liquidity challenges and debt distress.

Mr. President,

Earlier this year, Trinidad and Tobago welcomed the landmark adoption of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable use of Marine

Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction. Trinidad and Tobago actively participated in the negotiations along with its CARICOM counterparts. We are fully confident that when this Treaty enters into force, the benefits would redound to all of humankind.

Mr. President,

The 2030 Agenda envisions a revitalized global partnership for sustainable development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity. It would however be impossible Mr. President for our sisters and brothers in Cuba to achieve these goals, if the anachronistic economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed against that country remains in place. For over six decades, the People of Cuba have been grappling with significantly diminished prospects for charting a course towards prosperity, meaningful progress and sustainable development. To this end, Trinidad and Tobago reiterates its call for the unconditional lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, and certainly for its removal from any unjustified listing as an alleged State Sponsor of terrorism.

Mr. President,

Despite our challenges, 2023 has been a momentous year for us in CARICOM. In addition to your election as President of the General

Assembly, we recently celebrated in Port of Spain, the fiftieth anniversary of the Caribbean Community under the theme “50 years strong: A Solid Foundation to Build On.” It was indeed a confluence of celebratory events, as we also rejoiced over the election of CARICOM members to major UN bodies. In this regard, we congratulate Guyana on its election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, as well as Haiti and Suriname on their election to the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. President,

Guided by our Charter and the spirit of multilateralism, we can use the popular aphorism as inspiration “coming together is the beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” If we were to apply that maxim, I have no doubt that we can achieve Peace, Prosperity, Progress and Sustainability for all.

Mr. President,

Trinidad and Tobago will be doing its part. We continue to stand on our principles, to deploy our diplomacy and leadership in the service of the common good, to uphold international law, and to work with all Member States in our commitment to leave this world safer, healthier and better.

Mr. President,

I thank you.