



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT

by

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to the United Nations and Head of the
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to the

61st Session of the United Nations General Assembly
in the General Debate

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Madam President

It is indeed an honour for me to extend to you sincere congratulations on behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on your election to the Presidency of the 61st Regular Session of the United Nations General Assembly. As the third woman ever to hold this esteemed position, your appointment is of special significance and must be duly recognized. Trinidad and Tobago is convinced that your extensive experience in multilateral diplomacy and international legal expertise adequately equip you to guide the work of this Assembly to a successful conclusion.

We take this opportunity as well to welcome most warmly the Republic of Montenegro as the 192nd Member of the United Nations and wish its people and government continued peace, stability and prosperity.

We would also wish on this occasion Madame President, to recognize the astute and efficient leadership of the President of the 60th Session, Mr. Jan Eliasson of Sweden who discharged the mandate of follow up entrusted to the 60th Session by our Heads at the 2005 Review Summit, efficiently, dispassionately and with subtle dexterity, getting us past hurdles that challenged to the core the very working methods of this Assembly. His efforts also enabled the international community to create two crucial new international institutions, namely the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission as part of the ongoing reform of the United Nations.

Trinidad and Tobago is hopeful that the new Human Rights Council will be an effective instrument for the defense and promotion of human rights worldwide, denouncing without fear or favour gross violations of human rights, and seeking through dialogue and cooperation to bring about full compliance with internationally accepted norms related to universal fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Madame President, institutional support for countries in transition from the post conflict to the sustainable development phase is the *sine qua non* for the success of efforts to restore peace and normalcy. It is in this context that Trinidad and Tobago views the indispensable role to be played by the Peacebuilding Commission in those countries that have been traumatized by internal strife for years.

Madame President, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan is a very special friend of Trinidad and Tobago, and might I confide, moreso of Tobago. It is with mixed emotions then that we bid him farewell at this Session. Our seemingly unassuming Secretary General has, for the period of his tenure, steered the vessel that is this Organisation with an abundance of skill and clarity of vision, keeping it on an even keel as it traversed one of the most turbulent periods in its history. He has been the champion of principle, a spokesperson for international justice, the staunchest

defender of all that this Organisation stands for, and to which our countries all subscribe.

Mr. Secretary General, there is so much that you have done that history will record. For us it suffices that you have been the beacon in keeping the U.N. ideal alive during these difficult times.

Madame President, the role of the Secretary-General in the twenty-first century is no longer that of a mere chief administrative officer, burdensome as that may be, but one that requires profound knowledge of the dynamics of current inter-state relations.

Trinidad and Tobago is hopeful, therefore, that as we elect a successor to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the Security Council will recommend to the General Assembly a person whose diplomatic skills are highly regarded, whose leadership abilities are well recognized, and who will be able to maintain an excellent working relationship with all Member States and enjoy the confidence of the five (5) permanent members of the Security Council thereby facilitating decisive and timely actions by the Organisation when they are most urgently needed.

The function of Secretary General can only be effectively carried out with the firm support of the entire international community. It is therefore vital that the process from which the chosen candidate will emerge be as inclusive and transparent as possible and that it remain faithful to the principles and procedures enshrined in the Charter as these relate to his or her appointment.

Madam President, the international community continues to grapple with the absence of realistic and pragmatic solutions to many longstanding global problems. A just and lasting peace in the Middle East continues to elude us and the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people continues to worsen daily in view of the economic and financial stranglehold placed on their economy following the assumption of power by democratic means by the political grouping of their choice. We urge the major political parties in the Palestinian Territories to find common ground that would satisfy the aspirations of the Palestinian people, who for generations, have longed to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.

Peace and security in the Middle East remains threatened also by conflicts of more recent vintage. The use of force disproportionate to the threat at hand as in the recent cases of Gaza and Lebanon, has also had the effect of increasing the suffering of the civilian populations concerned, of destroying vital national infrastructure and has served only to increase bitterness and hatred among those populations and to inspire resort to extremism.

Madam President, Trinidad and Tobago also views with growing alarm the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Darfur region of Sudan and calls upon the international community to exercise its responsibility to protect the people of Darfur. The international community has a fundamental legal and moral obligation to act in cases such as this of egregious violations of human rights.

It is incumbent on us to institute immediate measures to provide security and alleviate their suffering. We must also bring to justice under the International Criminal Court (ICC) those responsible for the crimes against humanity committed in Darfur.

Trinidad and Tobago exhorts the Government in Khartoum to accept the presence of a United Nations-mandated peacekeeping force that would enhance the capacity to monitor the Darfur Peace Agreement. Such a force could also provide the necessary security for the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons in make-shift camps and for the return of refugees from neighbouring Chad, and would facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance.

On another front Madame President, Trinidad and Tobago applauds the efforts of the ICC and welcomes with satisfaction the progress made to bring to justice the perpetrators of those heinous crimes committed against the peoples of Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Trinidad and Tobago views the universal adherence to the ICC as integral to entrenching the rule of law in the conduct of international relations, and as yet another pillar in the promotion of international peace and security. We again urge Member States of this Organization that are not yet Party to the Rome Statute of the ICC to consider acceding to this instrument as soon as possible.

The well-being of peoples the world over is threatened not only by violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law but also by individual and collective acts of terrorism which the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago resolutely condemns. We are indeed hopeful that the recent adoption by this very Assembly of a global counter-terrorism strategy will lead to a holistic and integral approach to a phenomenon that threatens the internal peace and security of States in virtually all regions of the globe. It is also our sincere hope that this august body would, in the near future, conclude its deliberations on a comprehensive international convention against terrorism that would provide a legal framework that is acceptable to all nations in combating this scourge.

Madam President, it has become something of a cliché that there would be no peace and security in the world without development, and conversely no development without security.

It was with a degree of concern then that we were witness to a near total relegation to secondary status of the development dimension of the international agenda at the 2005 Millennium Review Summit. It provided some degree of relief subsequently, that after long and arduous negotiations, we were able to agree on a development resolution that sought on the basis of a global partnership, among other things, to operationalize and implement the development commitments made at the major summits in the economic, social and related fields.

The Resolution also provided for monitoring mechanisms to follow up on the commitments by the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Trinidad and Tobago is hopeful that the commitments recorded in that Resolution to the achievement of those international development objectives would be honoured and not be the subject of renegotiation at the next review juncture.

Madame President, global peace and security are also threatened by a failure on the part of the international community to bring about the necessary structural changes in the fields of international trade and in economic and financial relations.

Like most developing countries, Trinidad and Tobago is painfully aware of the significant imbalances that have been adversely impacting on developing economies. The current suspension of Doha Round trade negotiations, and the delay in the resumption of those talks are consequently of particular concern to us given the outward looking orientation of our economy, and the fact that a most basic tenet of our trade policy relates to increased market access for the export of our goods and services.

Trinidad and Tobago therefore joins with other small vulnerable economies in calling for a process that would accelerate the recommencement of negotiations, while ensuring that adequate treatment is afforded to the development dimension. It is crucial that global trade rules be enhanced in recognition of the need for treatment to be accorded to small economies that would take cognizance of their special circumstances, and allow them to participate in world trade in a manner commensurate with their national capacity to do so.

Madame President, even while our economies grapple with the systemic imbalances in the international trading system, at home, Trinidad and Tobago like many other Caribbean countries, faces social challenges with a global reach. One such challenge manifests itself in the increasing resort to gun violence by our young people and by others engaged in the nefarious drug trade. The countries of the Caribbean Community are not producers of small arms and light weapons, yet small arms are increasingly visible in our societies and escalate the fatality levels in the commission of many serious crimes.

Much of the illicit trade in firearms and related activity in our Caribbean region are linked to the illicit trafficking of drugs. Yet the international cooperation from our development partners, essential to help us stem the flow of illicit drugs through our countries, already recognized as key transit States, is not forthcoming.

Trinidad and Tobago accordingly urges the international community to provide the necessary resources to bolster Caribbean regional efforts aimed at interdicting drug shipments and putting an end to the flow of illicit firearms that negatively and profoundly affect the security and development of the region. Madame President, it is well known that the living standards suggested by positive economic indicators are of little consequence if the basic security and sense of well - being of the individual is under threat.

Similarly, the failure by the international community earlier this year at the Review Conference to reach broad agreement on additional measures to further implement the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms has been a source of disappointment to Trinidad and Tobago. We are heartened that within the international community there appears to be emerging a broad understanding of the utility of an international legally binding instrument to

govern the international arms trade.

Trinidad and Tobago therefore strongly endorses the call by some States for the conclusion of such an instrument. We are also of the view that until such time as such a treaty becomes a reality, it is imperative that the major producers and exporters of small arms and light weapons establish comprehensive export controls in order to ensure that such weapons are not diverted into the illicit trade.

Madame President, Trinidad and Tobago's approach to development places primary focus on enhancing the living standards and sense of well being of the individual. Thus even as we address the major problems of a global nature we should not forget those among us that face greater challenges in realizing their full potential. The international community has recently become increasingly sensitized to the difficulties faced in almost all spheres of activity by persons with disabilities, and during the 60th Session of the General Assembly, successfully negotiated a draft convention on the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. Trinidad and Tobago joined in the consensual adoption of the final negotiated text, and looks forward to its formal adoption by this Assembly and its subsequent opening for signature. We have in the interim developed and are in the process of implementing a National Policy on Persons with Disabilities.

Another area that cries out for timely and decisive action by the international community is that of the environment. Our planet today continues to be ravaged by patterns of production and consumption that gravely threaten its sustainability and give rise to phenomena the management of which consumes the already stretched energies and resources of particularly small island-developing states. The challenges to these countries posed by such phenomena as climate change and sea-level rise, as well as the effort and resources necessary to recover from adverse seasonal weather patterns, add another dimension to those that they already face in the area of economic and social development. Trinidad and Tobago invokes that same spirit of partnership of the international community to work towards the full implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, it being the framework for the collective development of this vulnerable grouping.

In the midst of such daunting challenges, the littoral states of the Caribbean are faced with the constant threat of a maritime casualty resulting from the shipment of radioactive or other hazardous wastes through the Caribbean Sea. Such an occurrence would create the potential for an environmental disaster for all countries with a Caribbean coastline, but particularly would also threaten the economic well-being and livelihood of the many small island-developing states of the Caribbean that depend on this fragile eco-system.

Trinidad and Tobago is of the view that the integrated management approach of the recently conceived Caribbean Sea Initiative will be critical to advancing the development goals of the member states of the Caribbean and uses this opportunity to seek the support of all UN Member States for this initiative that seeks to ensure that the Caribbean Sea is recognized by the United Nations as a Special Area in the context of Sustainable Development.

Madame President, Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the partnership approach in all areas of international interaction, be it for sustainable development, peace and security, human rights or humanitarian assistance. It is a position that informs a fierce defence of multilateralism in full recognition of the benefits of collective action and of the responsibility of each country to assist when in a position to do so within the limits of its resources. This thinking underlies the actions taken by Trinidad and Tobago in respect of the provision of economic and humanitarian assistance both institutionally as well as directly to countries in our region and to those further afield.

It is in this context that Trinidad and Tobago pledges its full support for the economic and social development of the Republic of Haiti in its return to constitutional governance that has led to its re-admission into the Councils of the Caribbean Community, and calls for the release of all donor funds already pledged.

The history of Haiti is of special significance for the struggle for independence in the Caribbean, and is linked to other historical developments more international in scope. One such development is the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade, the 200th anniversary of which will be marked in 2007. The slave trade has had adverse long-term effects on the social and economic development of parts of Africa that is still being felt today.

We too in the Caribbean were not spared its effects and are of the view that any call on the international community to mark this occasion should go beyond the need merely to reflect on the atrocities committed during this perverse period of our history. Trinidad and Tobago thus lends its support to the call made by countries of the African Diaspora in the Caribbean and elsewhere, for the commemoration by the United Nations in 2007 of the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade.

Madam President, the United Nations is central to any resolution of the problems with which the international community is confronted in today's world. It is only by having a strong United Nations, fully resourced by its member Governments and imbued with the necessary political will, would we be able to tackle these problems and provide this and succeeding generations with a life lived in dignity, free from daily degradations of the human spirit; in peace and security, free from the ravages of war; and in economic and social conditions, rid of poverty, illiteracy, hunger and disease.

This historical moment requires bold initiatives on the part of the General Assembly President, who in tandem with the new Secretary General is called upon to provide the vision, courage and strength of conviction necessary to carry the United Nations forward along the path towards confronting the myriad challenges facing the Organisation in today's world. We are confident that you will both be up to the task.

I thank you Madame President.