



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT

by

**H.E. Ambassador Philip Sealy,
Permanent Representative
of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
to the United Nations**

**in the
General Debate of the 62nd Session
of the United Nations
General Assembly**

**New York
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Mr. President,

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate you most sincerely on your election as President of this 62nd Session of the Assembly. My delegation is confident that your in-depth knowledge of international economic and political issues, complemented by your extensive diplomatic experience, will serve you in good stead to guide our deliberations effectively in the coming months.

2. I wish also to take this opportunity to express Trinidad and Tobago's deep appreciation for the leadership of your predecessor in Office, Her Excellency Shaikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the first Arab woman to hold that lofty position. As President of the General Assembly, her efforts contributed to focusing the attention of the international community on, *inter alia*, the pressing challenge of climate change, thereby facilitating in the process, global awareness and increased support for internationally agreed action on this issue, given its impact on our planet, and moreso on the very survival of several small island developing states.

Mr. President,

3. I consider the occasion opportune as well, to convey Trinidad and Tobago's unequivocal support for the efforts of our current Secretary General His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-Moon. Mr. Secretary General, we commend your leadership role in the troubling humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan, and applaud your initiative to convene a High- Level Event on Climate Change. These are indeed apt demonstrations of your willingness to confront forcefully and resolutely those issues of transcendental importance to the present and future well-being of peoples everywhere.

Mr. President,

4. Though small in size and population, Trinidad and Tobago, through visionary leadership, transparency, public accountability and prudent management of our natural resources, is continuing along a path of sustainable development. Our development strategy seeks to go beyond the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and to ensure that by the year 2020, all sectors of our multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society will enjoy a standard of living comparable with that of the developed world.

5. The performance of our economy draws its strength from vertically integrated and well developed energy and petrochemical industries, complemented by buoyant and competitive manufacturing and services sectors, including financial services and tourism as well as by the on-going process of transformation of the agricultural sector. All of these factors provide the basis for economic growth levels of 8.6% over the last five years and a recorded rate of 12% in 2006. We have also been able to achieve a 7% reduction in poverty from a high of 24% in 1998 and are experiencing a low unemployment rate of 5.9%.

6. It is on the basis of this strong economic performance that Trinidad and Tobago has continued its commitment to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) as we seek to advance the integration process, moving from the current stage of the single market to that of a single economy. Effective participation in this process of further strengthening and deepening the regional integration movement remains a major foreign policy goal of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It is for this reason that Trinidad and Tobago continues to provide economic and humanitarian assistance to several CARICOM countries adversely affected by natural disasters, given the fact that our economic fortunes are inextricably linked

7. But Mr. President, our further economic development and that of the global community as a whole, is dependent upon the existence of global peace and security. In this regard, the Security Council has continued to take timely decisions on global crises in different parts of the globe, on terrorism and on nuclear non-proliferation. The reform, however, of that principal organ of the United Nations charged with the maintenance of international peace and security continues to elude us. It is time to engage in bona fide negotiations on this matter. The status quo is unacceptable. The Security Council must be reformed to reflect the current geopolitical realities of the 21st century and no longer the world as it was in the aftermath of World War II. New and important actors from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean are a part of today's global reality and an expanded and enhanced Security Council will provide it with even greater legitimacy and support in the discharge of its Charter responsibilities. Trinidad and Tobago is of the view that much progress was made during the 61st session and the political momentum which was generated should not be lost.

Mr. President,

8. A reinvigorated Security Council is needed to address the major issues that continue to bedevil contemporary international relations. In the Middle East, the failure to move forward on the peace process has set back global efforts for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The Palestinian people are yet to exercise their legitimate right to self determination and to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State in an undivided homeland. We call on the Quartet to resume the road map for peace in the Middle East so that the world can in the foreseeable future witness two States, Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace, within internationally recognized and secure borders. Internationally acceptable solutions must also be found to address the fate of the Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem and the issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. All these matters have remained pending for far too long and the Palestinians should no longer be denied the realization of their statehood.

9. While there has been little or no progress on the matter of peace in the Middle East, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is pleased to note that, with respect to the humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of Sudan, agreement has finally been arrived at which would result in the deployment of a joint United Nations/African Union hybrid peacekeeping force for Darfur. We welcome this positive development. While we hope that the hybrid AU/UN force will bring peace and stability to the region and enable humanitarian relief aid to flow once again to where

it is most urgently required, all our efforts must now be turned towards putting a cease-fire in place and striving to have all the rebel groups fighting in Darfur move towards a peace arrangement with the Sudanese Government. Peace and justice are, however, inextricably linked and there can be no lasting peace in Darfur without accountability for the heinous crimes committed against the people of Darfur during the conflict.

10. While international political and security developments continue to pose major difficulties for the international community, developments in the area of international trade give rise to even greater concern. We are mindful of the reality that the steadfast efforts of Trinidad and Tobago, of the sub region and of other developing countries to confront effectively the challenges of globalization and liberalization, can be rendered futile, in the absence of a fair, transparent and equitable international economic trading system. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago therefore remains deeply concerned that after many years of protracted negotiations characterized by many missed deadlines, the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations is yet to reach the compromise that will pave the way for an agreed outcome, particularly in the areas of agriculture and industrial products, and which incorporates the development dimension. We underscore the importance of ensuring that the principle of special and differential treatment is truly reflected throughout the negotiating modalities, and we call upon all parties in the negotiations to take fully into account the special needs of small and vulnerable economies.

11. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago fully expects that the negotiations will resume in good faith, and that there will be commensurate progress in agriculture, industrial products and all other areas of the negotiations in keeping with the mandate of a single undertaking. This will ensure the successful conclusion of the Round, and an outcome which fully reflects the commitment undertaken at Doha to put development at the heart of the multilateral trading system.

12. While these trade negotiations seemed to have stalled and will require the injection of a high degree of political will to bring them to a successful conclusion, the international community is faced with yet another global concern in the form of climate change. As a result of greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel use and land use changes through deforestation, the world is already committed to an increase of 1.14 degrees Celsius by the end of the next two decades.

13. There therefore needs to be a clearly defined global mitigation strategy that keeps the long term temperature increase at less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Increases over 2 degrees Celsius are very likely to have an increased adverse impact on small island developing States such as Trinidad and Tobago. In order to avoid a global climate disaster, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago calls for urgent and ambitious action by all States in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities, respective capabilities and social and economic conditions.

14. As a State Party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and to the Kyoto Protocol we call on all States Parties to the UNFCCC particularly major emitters of greenhouse gases to agree at Bali to launch negotiations on a post 2012 regime. In those negotiations, the

Government of Trinidad and Tobago and other like-minded CARICOM Member States will seek to achieve substantial and legally binding emission reductions in the shortest time frame possible as well as significant increases in the level of resources available to developing countries and in particular to small island developing States to assist them in adapting to the adverse effects of climate change. To this end, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has already made a voluntary contribution of US\$1 million to the Trust Fund for the CARICOM Climate Change Centre in Belize to strengthen that institution so that it can assist CARICOM Member States in implementing their adaptation strategies to deal with the adverse effects of climate change.

15. But we in the Caribbean are not only concerned about global warming and its adverse effects on Caribbean SIDS. We are also deeply interested in preserving the marine environment of the Caribbean Sea which is an important natural resource for all its littoral island and continental States given their varying degrees of dependence on tourism. The passage through the Caribbean Sea of ships carrying radioactive waste is an issue to which all CARICOM Governments attach the highest importance. May I take this opportunity, Mr. President, to reiterate the continued objection which Caribbean countries maintain against the use of the Caribbean Sea for the transshipment of radioactive wastes. The repeated scientific and safety reports may offer some reassurance but do very little to appease our concerns.

Mr. President,

16. The Honourable Prime Minister, in his recent 2008 Budget Statement, brought into sharp focus the vision of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for our cosmopolitan society. He emphasized that the Mission in which we as a nation are engaged collectively is a transformation process aimed at bringing "sustained prosperity and the requisite higher quality of life to every individual, family and community across the country". The Government has sought to give concrete expression to the national quest for a highly competitive, productive, innovative and caring society, in which all are encouraged to and are facilitated in attaining their highest potential.

17. It is, accordingly, in this spirit that we have just signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which was adopted and opened for signature during the 61st session of the United Nations General Assembly; and will take steps to ratify same once the necessary implementing legislation is put in place to complement what is already provided for in our domestic policy with regard to persons with disabilities.

Mr. President

18. It is this confidence in and respect for the International Rule of Law which encouraged Trinidad and Tobago since the late 1980s to campaign, at the highest political levels, for the establishment of an International Criminal Court (ICC). We are keenly aware of the important strides being made by the ICC, as it devotes its attention to the prosecution of individuals accused of committing the crimes within its jurisdiction, namely, genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

19. Trinidad and Tobago recalls in this connection the adoption at the Rome Conference of the Resolution recommending that a Review Conference of the Court's Statute consider the inclusion of trafficking in illegal drugs on an international scale within the Court's jurisdiction. We must seize the opportunity now dictated by international trends to engage fully the ICC in efforts to stem the tide of this scourge and similarly to consider the inclusion of terrorism, once that term is clearly defined by the international community.

20. Our approach will be grounded in the recognition of the continued deleterious effects which the international trade in illegal drugs is having on the social fabric of societies the world over, including in the Caribbean. The time has come for the international community to recognize the illicit trafficking of drugs as an international crime subject to the jurisdiction of the ICC.

Mr. President,

21. Another area of public international law to which Trinidad and Tobago attaches the utmost importance is the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (the Convention). This year's meeting of the United Nations Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS), addressed the important issue of "marine genetic resources". Part XI of the Convention explicitly provides that the Area beyond national jurisdiction and its resources are the common heritage of mankind. Trinidad and Tobago is accordingly of the view that any legal regime developed to regulate the marine genetic resources of the Area, must be guided by the common heritage principle. The adherence to such a principle would ensure that these resources of the Area, are exploited for the benefit of all members of the international community and not just for the benefit of those with the financial wherewithal and the technical know how.

22. Similarly Mr President, we recognize that all States Parties to the Convention are ipso facto members of the International Seabed Authority (the Authority). Despite the importance of the current work of the Authority on polymetallic sulphides and cobalt crusts many States Parties fail to attend the annual sessions of the Authority. The continued absence of States undermines the common heritage principle laid down in Part XI of the Convention and threatens the legitimacy of the work of the Authority. We accordingly call on all Members of the Authority to attend regularly the sessions of the Authority and thus assist it in adopting regulations governing the exploration and exploitation of these mineral resources in the Area which are intended to benefit all mankind.

Mr. President,

23. Trinidad and Tobago like its Caribbean neighbours, acknowledges its maternal links to Africa and notes that the year 2007 was an important one for the peoples of that continent and for the African diaspora worldwide. Earlier this year, we observed here at UN Headquarters and in the respective capitals of all CARICOM States, a programme of activities intended to raise the consciousness of peoples the world over regarding the horrors of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the deleterious effects which it had on Africa depriving that continent of millions of its inhabitants and on people of African descent in the Americas. We in Trinidad and Tobago have used the opportunity to educate all our citizens on the degrading treatment to which these human beings were subjected and to demonstrate that, notwithstanding our history of slavery followed by indentureship

of other segments of our population, the people of Trinidad and Tobago have developed a harmonious cosmopolitan society which is an experience worthy of emulation in other parts of the globe fractured by fratricidal ethnic and religious struggles.

Mr. President,

24. In order that the suffering of millions of enslaved Africans would not have been in vain, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago intends to make a financial contribution to the CARICOM Initiative for a Permanent Memorial to be erected within these hallowed walls of the UN in remembrance of all those who perished in the Middle Passage and on the plantations in the New World in their struggle for freedom and liberation from the yoke of slavery. We call upon the international community to contribute generously to such a worthwhile and historic venture.

25. In conclusion, Mr. President, the United Nations remains a centre for harmonizing the goals and aspirations of all mankind. There is no other universal forum with greater legitimacy or more suitably mandated to bring about an improvement in the human condition. We must address all these global issues with a firmness of purpose and in a resolute manner if we are to save coming generations from the adverse consequences of war, of underdevelopment, of poverty and of the deleterious effects of climate change and to ensure that all humanity can enjoy improved standards of living in freedom and in dignity on a habitable planet.

I thank you, Mr. President.