



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE
UNITED NATIONS**

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PRESIDENT OF THE 78TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

VISION STATEMENT

“PEACE, PROSPERITY, PROGRESS, AND SUSTAINABILITY”

INTRODUCTION

I am proud, and at the same time humbled, to accept the nomination of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as its candidate for the position of President of the Seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. It has also been my special privilege to have been favoured with the political endorsement of my regional Group, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, GRULAC, whose approbation I deeply value and will work assiduously to honour.

I turn my attention now to earning the trust, confidence and support of the wider membership, to elect me as their President during the Seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly. In doing so, I commit to discharge the responsibilities of the Office of the President with vigor and dedication to that most cherished value, multilateralism, which in large measure unites us all, even if we may not always agree on the pathway to get us to our final destination. Multilateralism's uniqueness resides in the enhanced prospect and better advantage it offers us in finding global consensus to address and often to resolve complex global challenges, quite beyond the capacity of unilateral sovereign action to answer.

Many have questioned its relevance and ability to deliver real results where it matters most, on the ground, effecting change in people's lives. Yet we keep returning to multilateralism, despite the often-experienced frustrations, because of the very nature of the process itself. As a members-driven process that accords equal respect and value to each of the 193 members, UN multilateralism is indeed unique. Its mystique is that when challenged to create workable solutions, the outcome, represents more than just the position of 193 Members States. This is the type of multilateralism we urgently need now, to ignite the imagination, to recognize and seize the possibilities and turn them into opportunities, to think and act beyond the narrow and potentially paralyzing strictures of national interest, but rather as global citizens protecting our global commons from irretrievable harm, dislocation and dysfunction.

We need to recognize that sometimes, even informed self-interest demands cooperation and coordination with others, in order to eliminate exceptional common threats that may be of such extraordinary consequence as to constitute a vital interest. Both the scientific evidence as well as our own experiential evidence has demonstrated the negative impacts of climate change, highlighted the existential threats not merely to our lives and livelihoods, but also to planetary ecosystems and therefore, to the ability of human civilization to continue to occupy this planet. And in spite of it all, we have not been able over all these years to muster "the will," even in the face of billions of dollars' worth of infrastructure loss and property damage, to take decisive unified action as a community battling a common and worsening threat, to save ourselves and our civilization.

Clearly, a posture of denial or procrastination is not credible, as climate action delayed will impose significant additional unanticipated costs on us all. Fundamentally, we have got no other choice but to collaborate shrewdly to confront and change our realities; to adopt formulas that give us the best chances of overcoming the challenges at hand, or at the very least, mitigating their impact on our daily lives and livelihoods, and that of whole communities, while time still permits. This is the test of our time. Will we muster the strength and courage to make the bold, far-sighted transformational decisions, the effects of which will strengthen the bases for peace, prosperity, progress and planetary sustainability? Or will we allow geopolitics to so infect our judgement as to result in failure to engage in the most basic of human and political instincts, that is survival, and take decisive action to preserve the future of this planet as our natural habitat.

It is my view that the following are among the key elements of an effective Presidency - open and wide-ranging consultation, a keen ability to listen intently, transparency in decision-making, fairness, objectivity, independence, clear and effective communication with the membership and with third parties, maintenance of a posture of equidistance from all negotiating parties, adherence to the highest ethical standards and principles and, a certain willingness to take risk, tempered by more than a little dose of realism. In conceptualizing the thrust of my Presidency, I have chosen the following as my four watchwords, that is “**Peace, Prosperity, Progress and Sustainability**”, essentially because together they constitute the four supreme objectives before the international community, at this juncture; objectives which if successfully accomplished, would significantly alter the current trajectory of disappointment and disillusionment along which we seem to be proceeding, thus opening up the possibilities of a world with boundless opportunity, in which nations and people live in harmony with each other and in harmony with nature.

PEACE

The myriad of complexities faced by the international community with respect to peace and security have morphed into hybrid conflicts, which have exacerbated an already fragile global environment. In some parts of the world, there exists a significant deficit of trust among stakeholders, where geopolitical tensions have reached alarmingly precarious levels. Nuclear tensions are being manifested daily in certain theatres. Peace eludes us as much without as within as internal conflicts boil over, often triggering widespread suffering and hardship in the context of large-scale human displacement. To reverse this current trajectory, our responses must be grounded in a more robust multilateralism and most importantly, be more people centered.

As a community of nations built on the concept of collective security, we should aspire to work together to ensure inclusivity and that all voices whether big or small, powerful or otherwise are heard. The abandonment or repudiation of collective security will render the world more unsafe and more insecure, by setting off an arms race, the likes of which we have not witnessed before, as individual countries seek to build up their defense capability to meet any potential threat. It is critically important, therefore, that we hold fast to the principles and values of the Charter of the United Nations and honour its pledge to succeeding generations.

The passage of resolution A/RES/76/262 during the Seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly requiring any member of the P-5 of the Security Council who uses the veto pre-emptively and arbitrarily to vote down a resolution calling for urgent humanitarian action/intervention by the Council, is an important forward step in bringing a degree of transparency to the decision to invoke the veto, though the member applying the veto is required to explain its behaviour to the General Assembly in the context of an Emergency Special Session convened expressly for that purpose. This is a welcome innovation as a transparency mechanism.

However, ongoing problems with the functioning of the Council, the contamination of its role by geopolitical considerations, resulting in open questions about its capacity to carry out its mandate, the ability of a sitting chair to orchestrate the frustration of the will of the majority of the members of the Council all point to the necessity for substantive reform of the Security Council, within the framework of wider United Nations reform. That conversation is ongoing and while some preliminary steps have been made to provide greater clarity on members views in the context of “informals”, we are still some distance away from entering the formal negotiating phase, which will surely be arduous. There is, however, widespread acceptance among the membership of the

United Nations that the Council ought to be more representative of the current realities of international politics and should be made fit for purpose.

We must recognize that being in a state of peace is not necessarily the same as the absence of war. Peace requires an all-out commitment, including by the potential disputants. It requires constant nurturing, even during times when there are no hostilities, because it is during times of peace that the human spirit challenges itself to create new vistas and possibilities, indeed, to soar to new heights. Peace is a universally coveted aspirational condition or standard that produces stability and inspires confidence; confidence, a fertilizer of economic growth and prosperity. Prosperity and Peace are therefore inextricably linked and so we need to continue to make investments in peace, as it is the bedrock of modern stable productive thriving societies.

The corollary is also true, that is, that instability, conflict and war hold economic and social development hostage, denying people not merely the basic necessities of life, but also the comforts of safety and security. Peace cannot thrive in the midst of social and economic deprivation, and marginalization. It will forever be under threat until inequality, discrimination, poverty, hunger and poor health have been meaningfully and sustainably addressed to the satisfaction of the downtrodden. And in the long term, peace cannot be guaranteed by force of arms alone. The General Assembly must therefore find new initiatives to rekindle within us as human beings and as adherents and agents of peace, that unique spirit of conciliation and brotherhood that recommends and supports the choice of dialogue and negotiation over conflict and war. It is in the very nature of war, that even in victory, the victor loses massively.

In promoting and defending the Charter therefore, it is our duty as subscribers of its tenets, to promote and advocate the settlement of disputes by peaceful means and therefore to repudiate force or the threat of the use of it as a legitimate means of resolving conflict. These are among the most fundamental principles of multilateralism and whenever and wherever they are cast aside or violated, the General Assembly must be vehement in its rejection of military confrontation and other forms of modern warfare as they constitute real threats to the multilateral system itself and to international peace and security.

PROSPERITY

The pervasive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and global instability have placed extraordinary strain on our economies and societies and have created alarming consequences for people across the globe, especially the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable. As these crises prolong, poverty worsens, and inequality widens across the globe.

We need action, now more than ever, to reach and to help those furthest behind, especially for those countries in special situations. The full and effective implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries, as well as the upcoming Third International Conference on Land-locked Developing Countries and the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, both to be held in 2024, will be crucial opportunities to scale up investments towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in order to ensure that no country is left behind.

In this regard, the SDG Summit during High level Week this year will be a defining moment as the Summit is the ideal opportunity for Heads of State and Government to demonstrate real commitment towards the SDGs, including through contributing to global development funding. Quite apart from targeting those countries in

vulnerable situations, we must also find tailored solutions to address the fragility and other specific challenges facing countries in conflict and post-conflict situations as well as middle-income countries.

To ensure no one is left behind, the international community must also deliberately act in fulfilment of its commitments to the means of implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda itself. The proposed convening of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development should therefore garner the fullest attention of the General Assembly as we aim to strengthen actions towards enhancing financing, technology, debt sustainability and capacity-building to achieve sustainable development.

Globally, our efforts must be supported by a representative and enabling international economic and financial architecture that reflects and addresses the realities and needs of the United Nations membership today. The ambitious proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in his report “*Our Common Agenda*”, including the reform of the international financial architecture, going beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and the development of the Global Digital Compact will require deeper deliberations and incisive decision-making by the General Assembly.

PROGRESS

Despite placing poverty and hunger at the core of the Sustainable Development Goals, some projections indicate that approximately 680 million people, that is 8 percent of global population, will still be facing hunger in 2030. The fact is that even before the pandemic, progress towards meeting the sustainable development goals and targets was well behind expectation and the undertaking we collectively pledged in 2015 is becoming increasingly remote in terms of delivery. Without a quantum leap in terms of commitment and transformational action, the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Eradicating Poverty and Ending Hunger will be dreadfully missed.

The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were the first ever fully negotiated comprehensive international development strategy formally agreed between the Developed North and the Global South and was hailed as a new era in development cooperation. Certainly, to the extent that both parties were able to successfully agree the key elements of the diagnosis, “the problematique,” then surely administering the agreed remedies cannot be beyond us.

As the premier event taking place during High Level Week, the SDG Summit in September of this year will be critical in setting the tone for what happens in other processes taking place under the ambit of the General Assembly. It is crucial, therefore, that all delegations re-commit individually to re-energizing the SDG process and make a robust push towards delivering them as a life-changing comprehensive package by 2030.

It is counter intuitive that in the twenty first century, only half of humankind participates meaningfully in the economic and social life of the society; women and girls, often being systematically denied their basic human rights in many spheres of everyday life, including though not limited to, the right to an education, the right seek employment, the right to receive equal pay and the right to ownership of land. Moreover, the world continues to witness an epidemic of violence against women.

More generally, fundamental human rights have also come under severe attack or been denied to both individuals and groups, based on race, religion or ethnicity and other forms of discrimination, creating all too often a marginalized, dehumanized underclass, disallowed by society from exercising their rights as human beings and thus engendering deep-seated resentment that often culminates in the form of social strife and inter-group rivalry. Our efforts should be focused on investing in our children- our future and ensuring that they have access to quality learning opportunities and skills development programmes, proper nutrition, health care, safe water, protection, and shelter.

The General Assembly must redouble its efforts and its rhetoric to halt the insidious spread of human rights violations, based on the fact that we are all created equal and vested at birth with an innate, indivisible set of human rights. In a world where there is troubling evidence of growing institutionalized discrimination, we must use our platform in the General Assembly to reject such repugnant and scientifically baseless notions, while leading the conversation, at various levels, on the imperatives of establishing equality, equal rights and non-discrimination as legitimate social norms and indeed as the building blocks for strong, cohesive and just societies.

In also recognizing the key role that young people play in our aspirations towards the achievement of sustainable development, the continuation of the PGA's fellowship programme will contribute to our progress, as this programme offers a unique opportunity to promote youth engagement and to seek their perspectives in contributing to the solutions necessary to tackle the challenges they face as youths.

The progress that we will therefore advocate in the Office of President of the General Assembly will be consistent with the scope enumerated in the Agenda 2030, that will lift the quality of life of people in vulnerable situations everywhere, present the opportunity for them to feel empowered to pursue their individual goals and aspirations to their fullest potential, unfettered by the arbitrary imposition of unjust limitations. We must continue to strongly advocate for the full and meaningful engagement of women in all spheres, which will inevitably heighten the prospects for sustainable peace, prosperity and progress and indeed sustainability. Certainly, the staffing of the Office of the President of the General Assembly will respect and honour that principle.

As such, it is imperative that we intensify our efforts aimed at the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly, in order to better position it to discharge its role and authority, more effectively and efficiently.

SUSTAINABILITY

Biology teaches us that a dynamic, productive human civilization such as the one we have inherited cannot survive with longevity, let alone thrive on a polluted, over-exploited, planet whose natural ecosystems are damaged or tethering on the brink of collapse. When environmental limits are exceeded, there is the risk that the ensuing negative consequences may be irreversible, thereby undermining our ability to feed ourselves and to otherwise sustain future generations. Building a sustainable world, in harmony with nature, is the only way to ensure the future viability of our planet and of our civilization. Climate Change, desertification, pollution, biodiversity loss and land degradation are among the greatest challenges of our time and demand that we take collective, urgent actions to ensure the future of humanity and of the planet.

Last year's historic recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right, reinforces that the General Assembly has a key role to play in protecting our global commons by boosting global efforts towards greater climate action, restoring ecosystems, protecting the oceans, combatting

desertification and land degradation and promoting zero-waste. Mindful that we are in an era of growing food insecurity, focused attention must be given to the mechanics of enhancing soil and land productivity, if the planet is to support the 9.5 billion population projected to live on it by 2050, for which another “green revolution” will be required. Inclusive and sustainable industrial development can also play a crucial role in the realization of the sustainable development goals.

Transforming human behavior towards the planet from a psychology of exploitation and mass consumption to one of sustainable use and sustainable management will require that mankind inevitably reexamine and recalibrate our own patterns of production and consumption of natural assets, in order to ensure their responsible/sustainable use. Responsible management of these natural assets, including our global commons, means maintaining equilibria in the planet’s ecosystems, such that existing species can survive and indeed flourish, so guaranteeing their availability for the enjoyment and use by future generations. This may require us to abandon the over-consumption of a particular resource or perhaps of other materials, the presence of which imperils and harms the very survival of the resource itself, such as for example, the danger caused by mankind’s widespread usage of single use of plastics to fisheries stocks in marine ecosystems on the one hand and the over-fishing of certain fish stocks rendering them depleted on the other.

We must harness the momentum and renew the hope inspired by the outcomes we achieved over the last year, including those adopted at the Second United Nations Ocean Conference, the 27th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the 15th Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The upcoming SDG and Secretary General’s Climate Ambition Summits in September 2023 present excellent platforms for the international community to show real commitment to creating **‘the future we want,’** by scaling up transformative actions to avert the environmental crises before us, so that we can steer the world back on to the path of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Let us therefore, with vision and bold progressive action, strengthen the linkages between how we live and our environment by nurturing nature and investing in maintaining/restoring the ecological balance in our planetary systems and so, promote their long-term sustainability. By so doing, we would be safeguarding and preserving many of the environmental assets we enjoy today for the use and enjoyment of future generations. Such inter-generational stability would go a long way to guaranteeing future generations’ sustainable development and a standard of well-being, at least, no different from ours.

CONCLUSION

In the coming weeks, I will continue to engage regional and other groups as we collectively collaborate to bring forward a renewed atmosphere of cooperation and shared commitment in addressing the many challenges before the General Assembly. I will seek to enhance current approaches and adopt new ones with probable solutions that will benefit all, as we endeavour to deliver or at least to strengthen the bases for delivering peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability in the new world of the twenty-first century, characterized by equality of opportunity for all.