



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE DR. AMERY BROWNE,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO,
GENERAL DEBATE FOR THE 79TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

“Leaving no one behind: acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations.”

GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL,
UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK
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Mr. President,

Permit me to first extend to you congratulations, on behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on your election as President of this Session of the United Nations General Assembly. We are confident that you will be equal to the task, and I assure you of Trinidad and Tobago's full support and cooperation. Allow me to also extend, on behalf of the proud People and Government of Trinidad and Tobago, our sincerest appreciation to your predecessor and our fellow countryman His Excellency Dennis Francis, for his astute and exemplary leadership as President of the 78th Session, which was underpinned by the principles of Peace, Prosperity, Progress and Sustainability.

Mr. President,

I applaud you, on your chosen theme for this 79th session, as our global community finds itself at an inflection point that will determine the fate of future generations. Our planet really should have been in better shape in the year 2024. But instead, we are deeply disturbed and dismayed

by fresh divisions, the flouting of international law, gross violations of human rights and the flourishing of illegal settlements and oppression, which threaten peace and security around the world. Further, the alarm bells on the climate crisis have long been sounded, and yet we race toward a point of no return. The dream of ending persistent inequality remains a challenge to the global community, and hard-earned progress on gender equality appears to have stagnated in some parts of the world. It is for these reasons, Mr President, that Trinidad and Tobago welcomed the convening of the Summit of the Future and joined with the international community in the adoption of the Pact for the Future. The adoption of this Pact represents a renewal of our commitment as Member States to Multilateralism as the best way forward.

Mr. President,

Since the dawn of civilisation, humankind has endeavoured to become an improved version of itself in the pursuit of a better quality of life, human rights, equality, dignity, and prosperity. Our ingenuity as human beings has paved the way for some of the world's greatest

inventions and advancements. Regrettably, in our quest to find the best version of ourselves, we have discovered some of the worst aspects of humanity. Our planet and its People has been subjected to misuse and abuse, the effects of which have placed the majority of the global population facing some version of a doomsday scenario. Now more than ever we must summon a spirit of cooperation, and collectively put our shoulders to the wheel for the benefit of all of humanity. We used to say that our future depends on it, but now we have to say that our existence depends on it.

It is very well established and accepted that there can be no sustainable development without peace. If we fail to find credible solutions to the global challenges, humanitarian crises, and conflicts around the world, the international community would have squandered its responsibility and would have perpetuated a vicious downward cycle of regression. One example is the Russia-Ukraine war which is still ongoing almost three years after the initial invasion, with profound implications to the world order.

Mr. President,

Trinidad and Tobago is deeply troubled by the escalation of conflict and tensions in the Middle East. We remain distressed by the ongoing war on Gaza and by the chilling flashpoints of expansion that are being deployed. Only someone absolutely bereft of humanity would think that it is lawful and just, and even godly to respond to atrocities committed on one awful day of terror, by in turn committing atrocities after atrocities. How else are we to describe the killing of over two-hundred UN staff members-the highest death toll in United Nations history, and the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, including women and children. And this is not being done in secret- the entire world is watching, and the Global South in particular is....appalled.

The question remains: if innocent civilians including women, children and United Nations staff were being killed at this record rate in the developed world, how would the world's big powers have reacted. Not likely with euphemisms and platitudes. The double standards and continued resourcing of these ongoing violations of international law send a chilling

message to the Global South, and that message is this: There are some powerful people in this world who are of the view that a Palestinian child is less worthy of defence, protection, food, water, and life, than another child. I am not of that view. The people of my country are not of that view. CARICOM is not of that view. And decent people all over the world, including in Israel are not of that view. International law is not a tool of mere convenience to be muted for friends and trumpeted against enemies. Mr. President, International law is not a tool of mere convenience to be muted for our friends and trumpeted against our enemies.

In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago has joined in the call for an immediate, full, and complete ceasefire, and for the unconditional release of every single hostage. The truth is there is no military solution to this conflict, as peace will only be achieved through negotiations in good faith, and constructive dialogue among all concerned parties. Trinidad and Tobago has consistently expressed our support for a two-state solution where Israelis can live without the daily threat of terror and Palestinians can live without the daily weight of occupation, co-existing side by side

as responsible members of the international community. We firmly believe that this is the only credible pathway to end this cycle of violence – culminating in the establishment of a sovereign and peaceful State of Palestine alongside a sovereign and peaceful State of Israel within secure borders.

Rooted in this belief, Trinidad and Tobago took the decision to recognize the State of Palestine, in our contribution to the two-state solution, and in support of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian People for self – determination. I can report that just six days ago, Trinidad and Tobago and the State of Palestine officially established diplomatic relations. We look forward to the day when the State of Palestine would be welcomed to take its seat in the General Assembly as a full member of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

I now turn to the issue affecting the International Criminal Court. Despite its detractors, the evidence before us clearly shows the value and

effectiveness and necessity of the International Criminal Court. As a country that advocated for the establishment of the ICC, via the tireless work of our former Prime Minister and President A.N.R. Robinson, Trinidad and Tobago remains resolute in our support of the Court's mandate, to help put an end to impunity for the perpetrators of the most heinous crimes, and to provide a glimmer of hope to all victims of those crimes seeking justice within the jurisdiction of the Court. To this end, we continue to encourage all States that have not yet done so, to ratify and fully implement the Rome Statute of the ICC.

It was the late Reverend Martin Luther King Jr, who once said, "It is not possible to be in favour of justice for some people and not be in favour of justice for all people." For this reason, Mr. President, Trinidad and Tobago condemns, rejects, and repudiates any and all attempts to impede, intimidate or improperly influence the Court and its very courageous officials.

Mr. President,

We are very mindful that the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons in our own region poses an intolerable threat to national security and the lives of our citizens. The proliferation of illegal arms and ammunition has contributed to unacceptable increases in the levels of gun-related violence and fatalities in our small society and across CARICOM. In addition to our own efforts domestically, we continue to work with regional and international partners, to free our citizens from the horrific human cost associated with the easy access to small arms and light weapons, and their vicious use against citizens and families. Following the hosting by Trinidad and Tobago of our first regional symposium on Crime and Violence as a Public Health Safety Issue in 2023, CARICOM Heads met in Guyana earlier this year, to further elaborate innovative strategies on this matter of grave regional concern. Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the renewed efforts of our partners including the United States of America in particular, to work with us to help solve this deadly challenge which respects no borders.

Mr. President,

We also remain deeply concerned by the humanitarian and security crisis affecting the nation of Haiti. Earlier this year, from this very rostrum, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles, Chairman of the CARICOM Reparations Commission, stated, [and I quote] “we are calling for justice for the people of Haiti who should have been held aloft for being the first nation to end the evil of slavery. They should have been held aloft for being the most noble exemplars of freedom and the celebration of democratic possibilities in Western modernity. Instead, for their audacity of action they were punished by the Western world and demonized rather than deified.” [end quote].

We acknowledge that the path toward a stable and secure Haiti requires an indigenous, Haitian-led, Haitian-owned solution that is ably supported by the United Nations and the international community. In this regard, we welcome the news of the appointment of an interim Prime Minister and Cabinet. We believe that these are important steps in confronting the political, security and humanitarian challenges in Haiti. I salute the role of CARICOM, its Secretariat and the Eminent Persons

Group in helping the Haitians to achieve some of this progress. Trinidad and Tobago joins in commending the Kenyan Government for its deployment and leadership of the Multinational Security Support Mission, and we extend our appreciation to all States that have contributed to that operation, including Jamaica, the Bahamas and several others in our region.

An essential component for the success of this Multinational Security Support Mission is funding. In this regard, the Government of the United States of America has led by example and contributed the lion's share, and Canada has stepped up as well. But some relatively wealthy countries have either contributed drips and drabs or nothing at all. We appeal to the international community to contribute the necessary funding to support this critically important venture.

Mr. President,

Our quest to achieve human dignity within the context of sustainable development, cannot be divorced from the legitimate calls for reparatory justice for the history of chattel slavery and native genocide, in the Caribbean and elsewhere. The brutality of our colonial experience, the trauma of which still affects us to this day, has contributed significantly to underdevelopment. Our fore parents were rooted out and dehumanized, and their blood and sweat and tears and labour were extracted to build empires, and beautiful castles, and bridges, and treasures, which some of us pay money today to visit, and photograph and admire. Mr. President, we have been leveraging our collective voice to call for restitution for the historical, evil injustices and crimes against humanity committed against our fore parents, crimes which still affect us today. In reaffirming our commitment to this regional campaign, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago appointed last year a reconstituted National Committee on Reparations to provide additional energy and support to the CARICOM Reparations Commission and its work with the African Union and other like-minded bodies. And on a related note we wish to join with those who

are committed to and would welcome, the proclamation of a Second International Decade for People of African Descent.

Mr. President,

It is indeed troubling that as we approach the thirtieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform of Action, women and girls in some parts of this world are still denied basic human rights and freedoms and, in some quarters, there have been erosions of gains previously made. Trinidad and Tobago continues to be a strong advocate for the meaningful participation of women and girls in all aspects of society, as we recognize and value their critical role in the promotion and protection of human rights and in the building of peaceful and sustainable societies.

This is important to us, and as we have done biennially since the year 2010, Trinidad and Tobago will table in the First Committee this

year, our resolution on Women, Disarmament, Non-proliferation and Arms control, and we encourage Member States to support this forward-looking resolution.

Mr. President,

The Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States that was held in Antigua earlier this year, underscored the critical nature of the next decade for SIDS. We are very proud of what our fellow CARICOM Member State achieved in successfully hosting this impactful conference. Trinidad and Tobago anticipates that the robust implementation of the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS, will bring us closer to sustainable development, with the necessary means of support from the international community.

Mr. President,

We all acknowledge the adverse effects of climate change. We anticipate decisive outcomes regarding the New Collective Quantified Goal at the upcoming COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, which should catalyse

much-needed reform of the international financial architecture. Effective climate finance mechanisms are essential for the provision of accessible, adequate, and predictable funding, and this requires the operationalization and capitalization of the loss and damage fund. Climate finance goes well beyond project funding; it is an investment in the resilience and sustainability of the most vulnerable nations. The future beckons, a future in which SIDS have the capacity and resources to build infrastructure that can withstand severe climate events. That future would enable a just transition to renewable energy sources, and the full protection of our natural ecosystems.

Mr. President,

Like many others, Trinidad and Tobago has long called for the application of new multidimensional parameters for decision-making on access to financing. In this regard, we welcome the recent adoption by the General Assembly of the Resolution on the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index. We encourage the international community and the

relevant financial and development institutions to utilize the MVI, as it takes into account the realities that undermine sustainable development.

Mr. President,

Trinidad and Tobago stands in full solidarity with the people of Cuba, who have been subjected to an unjust embargo for more than six decades. This embargo severely undermines Cuba's prospects for attaining economic stability, growth and sustainable development. Whatever the objectives may have been sixty-years ago, these measures have clearly not achieved any desirable results – only the pain and suffering of ordinary people. The collective punishment of an entire citizenry through unilateral coercive measures is not only unconscionable, but also inconsistent with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Trinidad and Tobago therefore renews its call for the unconditional lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. Additionally, we have seen no justification for the designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism. We call for the removal of that unjust categorization as well.

So Mr. President, I conclude as I started. This world is at a point of inflection. With tension and division rising to a crescendo, small States have to be clear-eyed about their future. Trinidad and Tobago is small, but we are proud of that which makes us special and unique. We may not be a Superpower - but we have super powers, and these are our creativity and diversity. Our cultural milieu is indescribably vibrant, as our people are drawn from the First Peoples of our hemisphere, as well as the best of India, the best of Africa, the best of China and yes, the best of Europe too. We are blessed beyond measure. Some of you had a taste of it at the Reception when we introduced our President of the last session- and you enjoyed some of our delicacies including our delicious doubles and bake and shark, and you were delighted by performances on our national musical instrument the Steelpan and by the magical rhythms of our tassa drums. We have proven that we can be great leaders, including leaders of this very Assembly and we will continue to give more value to this world than we extract from it. We are strong, proud, staunch advocates of the UN system and multilateralism. In the end unity and togetherness is the

key... for these United Nations as well as for my own society. Om Shanti
Shanti Shanti, As-salamu Alaykum, Shalom Aleichem, and May God
bless you and your families.

Mr. President, I thank you.