

OPENING REMARKS TO BE DELIVERED AT THE
ACADEMIC SYMPOSIUM ON THE THEME,
“CHINA-CARIBBEAN COOPERATION IN THE CHANGING WORLD”
ARTHUR LOK JACK GLOBAL SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, MAY 19, 2026

Good morning.

It is my pleasure to deliver remarks at this morning's academic symposium, which is jointly hosted by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Academy of Social Science and the Arthur Lok Jack Global School of Business.

The theme for today's discussions, "China-Caribbean Cooperation in a Changing World," rightly presumes ongoing engagement between China and the Caribbean. The relationship between both sides has been a longstanding one, initiated by Chinese migration to the region in the early 19th century which has endured for over two hundred years.

Notwithstanding the bonds initially formed between our peoples, many years elapsed before the start of state-to-state relations between China and Caribbean countries. In 1971, still predating official ties, China received support from two English-speaking Caribbean countries for the restoration of its legitimate rights at the United Nations. Consequently, diplomatic relations were established one year later between China and Guyana and Jamaica, and with Trinidad and Tobago in June 1974.

The formal relationship between China and the Caribbean has been on the basis of the One China Policy, to which Trinidad and Tobago has firmly adhered. Although this Policy has not been adopted throughout the region, China's hand of friendship has been extended to all of the Caribbean, particularly in times of natural disaster and humanitarian need.

In the early years, cooperation focused on technical assistance and cultural exchanges. Subsequent decades saw a greater shift toward economic cooperation, particularly in the form of trade, financing and investment. Today, China stands among the Caribbean's largest trade partners and a significant source of concessional financing.

As part of this economic relationship, Caribbean countries have accepted the invitation to participate in the Belt and Road Initiative. Under this Initiative, Trinidad and Tobago developed the Phoenix Park Industrial Estate as part of its diversification thrust, providing a home to enterprises in the manufacturing and assembly, logistics and distribution, and information and communication technology sectors. Only last week, PriceSmart, the anchor tenant, opened its new Distribution Facility at the Estate, a demonstration of its attractiveness as an investment destination.

As China-Caribbean relations developed, they also expanded to include new areas of collaboration, such as agriculture, energy, health, housing, infrastructure and security. Additionally, there are now formal mechanisms for consistent engagement between both sides, namely the China-Caribbean Consultations and the China-Caribbean Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum.

It is said that the only constant in life is change, a maxim that is also applicable to the world of international relations. In recent times, prominent voices have called the rules-based order into question. Additionally, international norms seem to be at threat of erosion and conflict appears preferred to dialogue.

I dare say as a result of these variables, the speed of change presents a further challenge. Indeed, technology has advanced by leaps and bounds due to the use of artificial intelligence and unfortunately, environmental degradation has accelerated due to unprecedented changes in climate.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It may be argued that the response to a changing world requires innovation and fresh approaches. Therefore, I submit it is also important to leverage strong and durable partnerships, such as that which exists between China and the Caribbean. It is from this perspective that the informed discussions and in-depth analysis anticipated at this symposium will be well received.

As the theme for today's event is examined, I suggest that existing cooperation between both sides should serve as the foundation of future action, as there are lessons to be learnt and greater progress to be made. Surely China, a global economic superpower and technological innovator, still has much to offer to the Caribbean region, and symbiotically, the region, rich in terms of natural resources, talent and collective weight, remains of value to China.

Though the partnership between China and the Caribbean may require a shift in focus to address current and emerging hurdles, it is of mutual benefit to both sides to nurture and utilise that partnership to bring tangible solutions to our peoples.

For these reasons, I commend the collaborators behind today's event and I look forward to the ensuing discussions and the outcomes of this symposium.

Please be assured that the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs will continue to facilitate and support initiatives such as these that deepen and enhance Trinidad and Tobago's relationship with China.

I thank you.