

INTERVENTION DELIVERED BY THE HONOURABLE WILFRED NICHOLAS MORRIS M.P., MINISTER IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AND HEAD OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO DELEGATION TO THE 56TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES HELD IN PANAMA CITY, PANAMA FROM JUNE 22 TO 24, 2026 UNDER THE THEME “*FIRM MULTILATERALISM IN DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY: HEMISPHERIC SECURITY AND STABILITY IN THE AMERICAN STATES*”

(six (6) minutes allotted for delivery)

Mr. President,
Secretary General,
Assistant Secretary General,
Heads of Delegation,
Distinguished Delegates.

It is an honour for the Delegation of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to participate in this the Fifty-Sixth Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States under the theme, “Firm Multilateralism in Defense of Democracy: Hemispheric Security and Stability in the Americas.”

At the outset, I extend sincere appreciation to the Government and People of the Republic of Panama for hosting this Assembly with warmth and love.

Mr. President,

My delegation listened with great interest to the dynamic statement delivered by the President of Panama at last night’s Opening Ceremony when he called on all of us to strengthen cooperation, defend democracy and reaffirm respect for the rule of law as fundamental pillars for the development and integration of the region. He was accurate.

The challenges confronting the Americas are substantial and ever evolving, but they are not insurmountable. They require what this Assembly’s theme rightly describes as “firm multilateralism.”

Elected to serve as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the period 2027-2028, Trinidad and Tobago’s commitment to addressing these issues will also guide our tenure on the platform of “Building Consensus for the Realization of Sustainable Peace and Security”. On this note, I express the profound appreciation of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for your vote of confidence. This success is attributable to the transformational and visionary policy of the Honourable Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar and Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, Minister Sean Sobers and all the hard-working staff at home and abroad.

Trinidad and Tobago will seek to advance dialogue and practical action in three priority areas. They are: curbing the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, strengthening the Women, Peace and Security agenda, with particular attention to the protection and empowerment of women and children, and examining the implications of artificial intelligence for international peace and security.

These priorities reflect challenges that are increasingly interconnected and which resonate strongly within our Hemisphere. They also underscore our conviction that sustainable peace and security can only be achieved through forward-looking and cooperative approaches that address both traditional and emerging threats. We look forward to working with partners across the Americas and beyond to build consensus and advance meaningful outcomes on these critical issues.

It is particularly fitting that we gather in Panama during the bicentennial year of the Amphictyonic Congress of Panama. Leaders of the region, exactly two hundred years ago, envisaged a Hemisphere united through dialogue, cooperation and collective action. That aspiration remains as relevant today, as it was in 1826. In this context, Panama serves as both a symbolic and practical meeting place for the Americas. As the home of the Panama Canal, one of the world's most important arteries of global commerce, Panama continues to facilitate the movement of trade, people and opportunity, reinforcing the interconnectedness and shared prosperity of our region.

Mr. President,

This General Assembly convenes at a critical juncture, as the contemporary Hemisphere faces a complex array of challenges. Threats to democratic governance persist in various forms. Development gaps remain pronounced, particularly among vulnerable and developing economies. Social inequalities continue to constrain opportunities for many of our citizens. At the same time, the imperative for cross-country, multi-sectoral cooperation has never been greater. No Member State, regardless of size or capacity, can effectively address these challenges in isolation. Peace, security and prosperity in the Americas depend fundamentally upon our ability to work together.

This year, we will commemorate the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Adopted in Lima, Peru, the Charter remains one of the defining instruments of our Hemisphere, reflecting our joint commitment to democracy, human rights, and constitutional order.

This commemoration invites us not merely to celebrate the Charter's legacy, but to reaffirm its relevance in addressing contemporary realities.

Colleagues, democracy in the Hemisphere cannot be sustained by institutions alone, it thrives on the continuous improvement of the circumstances of all citizens.

Mr. President,

In defending our democratic systems, we must also confront the scourge of transnational organized crime. Criminal networks and other institutions, which weaken democracy. This is why we have worked alongside our hemispheric partners, through multilateralism, to confront the scourge of narcotics, leading to a 42 per cent reduction in crime in Trinidad and Tobago over the past year.

Mr President,

As I conclude, the Organization of American States stands at an important crossroads. The decisions we take today will determine whether this Organization continues to serve as a

meaningful instrument for democracy, security and development, or whether it risks becoming merely a forum for discussion without tangible impact.

Our peoples expect more than declarations. They expect results.

Let us therefore approach our deliberations with goodwill, pragmatism and a genuine commitment to finding solutions. Let us choose action over inertia and cooperation over division.

Trinidad and Tobago stands ready to work shoulder to shoulder with all Member States in advancing a Hemisphere that is more democratic, more secure and more resilient, so that we can create a prosperous region.

As I conclude I say, Panama has shown itself to be a gem of the OAS. Their hospitality this week is a reflection of what true friendship and partnership is about.

I thank you very much.