

**Remarks for Wreath-Laying Ceremony in Honour of the Victims of the Earthquakes of 24 June, 2026 delivered by the Honourable Sean Sobers, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs hosted by His Excellency Alvaro Sanchez Cordero, Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to Trinidad and Tobago**

**5 July, 2026**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago, and as Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, I offer our deepest condolences and unwavering solidarity to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

We gather today to honour the victims of the devastating earthquakes of 24<sup>th</sup> June 2026.

We mourn the official loss of approximately **2,954 lives**; we hold in our thoughts the **thousands still missing**, and we remember the **tens of thousands left homeless** by this catastrophe.

These are not mere statistics; they are fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, neighbours and friends whose absence is felt across families and communities.

This ceremony carries added significance, as it coincides with the 215<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of Venezuela's Declaration of Independence.

On 5 July 1811, Venezuela affirmed its **sovereignty, courage, dignity,** and **hope**. Today, even in mourning, those values endure in the resilience of the Venezuelan people.

For Trinidad and Tobago, this tragedy is deeply felt. Venezuela is not distant from us. We are neighbours, joined by **geography, history, culture, family ties, trade,** and the shared waters of the Caribbean Sea. In moments of sorrow, neighbours must stand together.

That is why Trinidad and Tobago's response has been both immediate and collective.

Following a directive from the Honourable Prime Minister and a high-level coordination meeting organized by the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, various entities, including government ministers and ministries, state agencies, municipal corporations, non-

governmental organizations, and significant private-sector organizations, have united to support relief efforts in Venezuela.

This includes representatives of the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association, the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the Energy Chamber, the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, the Ministry of Homeland Security, the Office of the Prime Minister, and other national stakeholders.

The generosity of corporate Trinidad and Tobago especially heartens us.

Several wholesalers, manufacturers, supermarkets, and private sector partners have already committed substantial support, including emergency supplies and collection points for public donations.

All 14 municipal corporations have been designated as public collection points, and arrangements have been made for donated items to be sorted, packaged, and shipped to Venezuela to support efficient distribution to those most in need.

This national effort reflects the best of who we are as a people: compassionate, practical, and willing to help our neighbours and our family in their time of greatest need.

As we lay this wreath, let it be more than a symbol of mourning. Let it also be a symbol of **friendship, solidarity, and hope.**

May it honour the memory of the departed. May it comfort the bereaved. May it strengthen the survivors. And may it affirm the enduring bond between the people of Trinidad and Tobago and the people of Venezuela.

As I stand here before you, I want to share that the Honourable Prime Minister is on her way to the Port of PLIPDECO to oversee the first shipment of relief supplies to Venezuela.

And as I close, we pray for the souls of those who have perished. We pray for those still missing. We pray for all who mourn. And we pray for Venezuela's recovery, renewal, and peace.

May the souls of the departed rest in peace and may the living find strength and solace.

**Thank you.**