

**Statement delivered by the Honourable Barry Padarath,
Minister of Public Utilities and
Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister,
at the reception to commemorate Bastille Day**

Tuesday, July 14, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

It is indeed an honour to join you this evening to celebrate Bastille Day, which, for the past 257 years, is recognized as a powerful symbol of the enduring ideals of **Liberty, Equality and Fraternity**.

Today, we commemorate that profound historic transformation, when on 14 July 1789, as a result of the Storming of the Bastille, the foundation for the making of the modern French Republic had its genesis.

More than a celebration, Bastille Day is a tribute to the resilience, courage and indomitable spirit of the French people, whose unwavering commitment to these ideals shaped one of the world's great democracies and continues to inspire nations across the globe, including the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

This year, however, the celebrations carry an added sense of excitement, as, there could hardly be a more fitting way to mark this national occasion than by rallying behind *Les Bleus*, whose remarkable journey at the FIFA World Cup has captured the admiration of football fans in Trinidad and Tobago and the world. May I say, that I will now need to declare my interests, having spent a very interesting afternoon with Cabinet colleagues looking on at the match. I must say thank you to both Their Excellencies from the French Republic and from Spain, I know that the

Ambassdor from Spain is here, and may we say congratulations to both teams, for a tremendous showing for this year's World Cup. What more national pride can you see epitomized by both Their Excellencies locked arm in arm celebrating Bastille Day while the Spanish team moves forward and the French team will play on Saturday for third place honours. Congratulations to both of you. Your Excellency when I look around I am almost certain that like me, many of those who are present here today was inspired by the talent, the brilliance, the panache, the way in which one responds to adversity and sometimes crisis, often says a lot of not only their own personal upbringing but also values of the entire society. This evening I am almost certain that throughout the entire audience both here in Trinidad and Tobago and fans alike around the world, can say that we have been certainly inspired by young Kylian Mbappé.

Excellency, France's inspiring march to the World Cup semi-finals today, which is an achievement of which the nation can be immensely proud, is a timely reminder that the values commemorated on Bastille Day extend far beyond history books. Just as the French Revolution embodied courage, resilience and an unwavering determination to shape a brighter future, the French national team has demonstrated those qualities on the field, pursuing excellence with passion, discipline and conviction, once more affirming France's place among the world's footballing elite.

Over the decades, the diplomatic relationship and friendship between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the French Republic has deepened and significantly expanded across varying priorities, underpinned by mutual respect, shared democratic ideals and a strong commitment to international cooperation.

In this regard, I wish to express my sincere appreciation for your kind invitation to this event and I am also grateful that, together with Ms. Alice Leroy, Desk Officer for the Caribbean of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, you took the opportunity to visit the Ministry's Headquarters earlier this week.

It is my sincere hope that during Ms. Leroy's visit, she has the opportunity to experience the very best of Trinidad and Tobago – perhaps simply tasting our cuisine, enjoying the captivating melodies of the steelpan, and exploring some of the many beautiful attractions that showcase the warmth, culture and natural beauty of our twin island Republic.

It is against this gastronomic and sensory mosaic that our close ties continue to translate into meaningful and tangible benefits for both our countries. Our partnership is equally enriched by vibrant cultural and people-to-people exchanges that continue to foster greater mutual understanding and advances the principle of equality that lies at the heart of France's national motto. Initiatives such as the recent Women in Diplomacy Reception, which took place at this very location, brought

together accomplished female leaders and aspiring young women across Trinidad and Tobago, reaffirming our shared commitment to inclusion and to empowering women as agents of peace, resilience and sustainable development and may I say as well, leadership.

This commitment to empowering women also finds expression in the multilateral arena. As Trinidad and Tobago prepares to take up its seat as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2027 to 2028 term, we look forward to working closely with France - a Permanent Member of the Council - in advancing peace and security and addressing the complex challenges confronting our international community.

Ladies and Gentlemen, interestingly enough, among the priorities that Trinidad and Tobago intends to champion during its tenure, is the Women, Peace and Security agenda, as we also recognize the indispensable role of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

We welcome the opportunity to work alongside France in advancing this important initiative, while also deepening our collaboration on other shared priorities, including maritime security, climate action and sustainable development.

I also indicate that France remains a valued development and economic partner for Trinidad and Tobago, as French companies continue to provide significant contributions in our energy sector and they have participated in landmark

infrastructure projects, inclusive of the ones in Port of Spain Waterfront, major highway developments and the Brian Lara Cricket Academy.

Likewise, the longstanding presence of CMA CGM in this country has further strengthened Trinidad and Tobago's position as a regional transshipment and logistics hub, enhancing trade and connectivity throughout the Caribbean and the wider world.

Looking ahead, there remains considerable scope to broaden our bilateral partnership. As Trinidad and Tobago repositions itself as a premier investment hub within the Caribbean and Latin America, this Government remains firmly committed to fostering a business-friendly environment that encourages investment, entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth. Against this background, we look forward to expanding collaboration with France in renewable energy, maritime services, infrastructure, digital transformation, technological innovation and football.

On that note and in the spirit of partnership, The Honourable Sean Sobers, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs was pleased to participate in the Ministerial Regional Security Conference in Martinique from June 29 to July 3, 2026. This was a significant event in the Caribbean region and apart from sharing and exchanging views on regional security concerns, he also had the opportunity to

meet and discuss similar issues with the Honourable Jean-Noël Barrot, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France.

On the topic of Martinique, permit me to offer congratulations, as on 16 June 2026, our French Caribbean neighbour, formally became the seventh Associate Member State of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Just a week prior, CARICOM Heads also warmly welcomed French Guiana to the fold, when on 7 July 2026, the Territorial Collectivity became the eighth Associate Member of CARICOM.

These landmark achievements reflect a commitment to regional cooperation and integration, and the Foreign Minister had the privilege of joining the Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister, who led the Trinidad and Tobago delegation to the Fifty-First Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of CARICOM, when we travelled to Saint Lucia from 5-8 July 2026, to witness this momentous occasion.

Excellency, ladies and gentlemen, let me assure that at the conclusion of our meetings, our leaders agreed on a wide-ranging regional agenda aimed at strengthening co-operation to address shared challenges. We therefore look forward to the opportunities for collaboration and the bridges which will be built with our Associate Members, in areas such as trade, energy, disaster management, education and football.

Excellency, as, I reaffirm our commitment toward a more peaceful, secure and prosperous future for both our peoples, I look forward to a promising future, as we celebrate the enduring relationship between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the French Republic.

And as it is said in France, as we lift our glasses, to His Excellency, our partners in diplomacy, join me in saying , Vive La France!