

REMARKS DELIVERED BY MS. JENNIFER DANIEL, PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AT THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 206TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA

Thursday, July 13th, 2017

12:30 p.m.

Good afternoon.

It gives me immense pleasure to share your company this afternoon as we celebrate together the 206th Anniversary of the Independence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. As some of you may be aware, Venezuela's National Day on July 5th is only one day apart from the anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Chaguaramas on July 4th and thus normally coincides with the annual Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, which this year was attended by H.E. Samuel Moncada, Minister of the People's Power for Foreign Affairs of Venezuela.

I am therefore particularly grateful to Ambassador Coromoto Godoy for scheduling this commemoration event in such a way that I would be able to convey personally to you, on behalf of the Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley

and the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, warm congratulations, as you commemorate this auspicious occasion. To put this 206th milestone into perspective, it is worth noting that in a few weeks' time, Trinidad and Tobago will be in a similarly celebratory mood, marking fifty-five years of independence, barely a quarter of the vast experience of Venezuela as an independent society.

We remember today that, on July 5th, 1811, seven of the ten provinces belonging to the Captaincy General of Venezuela adopted the Venezuelan Declaration of Independence. The territory became known as the American Confederacy of Venezuela and marked the birth of the very first independent nation in South America.

Even at this time when Venezuela is facing its own internal challenges, for the Venezuelan people, the anniversary of this event is one marked by pride in country, deep reflections on the past, high ambitions for the future and admiration for those who made the ultimate sacrifice to secure that hard-won independence in 1811. This occasion also provides an opportunity for Venezuelans the world over to affirm their sense of commitment to their country and its independence.

As you may be aware, this year marks fifty-four (54) years of formal diplomatic relations between Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela, which began just one year after our country began its own journey of independent statehood in 1962. As rewarding as the long span of our formal diplomatic engagement may be, it is the timeless and perpetual interface of our peoples, culture and history, predating the formal Government-to-Government relationship, that remains the true underpinning of our partnership.

It is common knowledge that Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago are separated by a mere seven miles at our closest points. We are neighbours only by chance, but friends by choice. Indeed, beyond the happy circumstance of geography, Venezuela is a valued partner with which Trinidad and Tobago shares a multi-dimensional bilateral relationship, anchored on a foundation of mutual respect and cooperation. As a consequence of our proximity, Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago share many common challenges and thus, we acknowledge the imperative of sharing a common vision to addressing them.

Like any good neighbour, Venezuela was our first visitor when a new administration took office in September 2015. Mere days following my appointment as Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, I received a High-Level Delegation from Venezuela. Together we held important discussions to improve cooperation on

a comprehensive range of issues, including energy, security, trade and cultural matters. So as to further the conversation on a framework of concrete measures and policy action to implement our agreed targets, a delegation from Trinidad and Tobago reciprocated the gesture by visiting Caracas in October 2015.

Later, on May 23rd, 2016, we had the great pleasure of receiving H.E. Nicolas Maduro, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. His visit provided an opportunity to concretize the way forward on the priority areas in which the technical work had sufficiently matured since October 2015. In the ensuing weeks and months, we wasted little time in consolidating and operationalizing our ambitions, particularly in the field of energy cooperation, and today both countries take pride in the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the implementation of the natural gas supply project from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, signed on the occasion of Prime Minister Rowley's visit to Caracas in December 2016.

I wish to commend the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for its willingness to assist us in unlocking the potential that this partnership has to offer. While we traverse this testing period of low energy commodity prices, rather than look inward, Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago are working in concert to

emerge stronger and more resilient. This resilience that we seek calls to mind the famous battle cry of Simón Bolívar, who said “Fight, and you shall win. For God grants victory to perseverance.” ["Lucha, y ganarás. Porque Dios concede la victoria a la perseverancia."]

In this regard, I must take the opportunity to salute Her Excellency Coromoto Godoy Calderón, an illustrious daughter of Venezuela and erudite diplomat, for her leadership of the Venezuelan Embassy in Port of Spain and her commitment to advancing and deepening the engagement between both our countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, I invite you to join me in a toast to the Government and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the celebration of two hundred and five years of hard-won and fiercely defended independence and to the enhancement of the strong ties between the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

I thank you for your attention.