

Remarks delivered by
Ms Reita Toussaint, Permanent Secretary (Ag),
Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs
on the occasion of the National Day of the Dominican Republic
Thursday 28th February, 2019

Good evening.

On behalf of the Government and people of Trinidad and Tobago, and on my own behalf, I extend greetings to the Government and people of the Dominican Republic on the occasion of the 175th Anniversary of the Independence of the Dominican Republic.

On this special occasion, we recognise that our countries share much in common, particularly at this time of year. February is a festive time of year for our countries, with Carnival celebrations taking place during the weeks before the beginning of Lent. For The Dominican Republic, this period is particularly festive, given the celebration of Independence on February 27, the anniversary of the Dominican Republic's declaration of Independence at Puerta del Conde in Santo Domingo.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic have shared a long history of collaboration, originating in May 1968 with the

establishment of diplomatic relations. This relationship was further strengthened through the opening by the Dominican Republic of a resident Embassy in Trinidad and Tobago in 2000, and the appointment by Trinidad and Tobago of Dr. Freddy Reyes as Honorary Consul in the Dominican Republic.

The warm and amiable relations between our countries have continued over the years to the mutual benefit of the Governments and peoples of both countries. Indeed, much has been achieved from our bilateral relationship including cooperation in priority areas such as trade and commerce.

In the area of trade, Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic share a dynamic relationship with transactions involving a substantial list of import and export items. Moreover, bilateral trade has been boosted by the conduct of Trinidad and Tobago Trade Missions to the Dominican Republic, the most recent of which took place over the period 12th to 16th September, 2017. Importantly, that Mission included Government officials and a number of private sector representatives provided another platform from which our countries could increase commercial linkages.

Trinidad and Tobago has also been gratified to welcome the Dominican Republic's business sector during the annual Trade and Investment Convention

(TIC) and Caribbean Investment Forum (CIF). We look forward to increased participation by Dominican officials, business-persons and companies at the TIC and CIF this year.

Notably, trade between Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic is governed by the CARICOM-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement which was signed in 1998. Through passage of the CARICOM-Dominican Republic Free Trade Act of 2001, Trinidad and Tobago gave effect to the Agreement. For Trinidad and Tobago, the Free Trade Agreement is of critical importance because it provides an ideal framework for trade expansion and economic diversification.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen Trinidad and Tobago is firmly committed to cooperating with our Caribbean neighbours. We are fully cognizant of the difficulties attendant in participating on the global stage as small States and are aware of the importance of partnering in trade and other arenas to ensure that the concerns of small States are heard.

Our common membership in regional organisations highlights our shared values and interests and provides the opportunity for Trinidad and Tobago and

the Dominican Republic as well as other Member States to engage in dialogue and find viable solutions to the problems affecting our countries. Significantly, the Dominican Republic has demonstrated unwavering support for CARIFORUM and EPA implementation and has also shown great commitment to the strengthening of the Association of Caribbean States.

It is therefore, a pleasure to extend, once again, on behalf of the Government and People of Trinidad and Tobago felicitations to the Government and people of the Dominican Republic as you celebrate your 175th year of Independence. Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I ask you to raise your glasses as we toast to the Government and people of the Dominican Republic.

I thank you.