

**The Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs (Sen. The Hon. Dennis Moses):**

Thank you very much, Madam President. I have very little doubt, and I have all confidence, in that persons who would have intently listened to what was just said, would come to the conclusion that it has all to do with—has very little to do with the truth, but all to do with, perhaps, fishing.

Madam President, Trinidad and Tobago became an independent sovereign nation on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, 1962, and thereafter, assumed control of its foreign policy. Less than one month later, Trinidad and Tobago was admitted to the United Nations on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September of 1962. Membership of other bodies followed. Trinidad and Tobago signed the Charter of the Organization of American States on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March in 1965, ratified the Charter on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March of the said year and deposited instruments of ratification on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March of 1967.

Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory to the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, otherwise known as TIAR, or the Rio Treaty. Trinidad and Tobago signed the Treaty on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April in 1967 and ratified it on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June and deposited it on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June of 1967. As part of the Treaty, the high contracting parties agreed that an attack by any State against an American State shall be considered as an attack against all the American States and, consequently, each one of the said contracting parties undertakes to assist in meeting the attack in the exercise of their inherent right of individual or collective self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. Self-defence, collective defence, notably should a member state come under military attack from another state and the need for a request from that state, the state or states directly attacked are central tenets of the Treaty.

Madam President, consistently over the years, Trinidad and Tobago has maintained a foreign policy anchored on multilateralism, non-interference and non-

intervention in the internal affairs of States, an independent position in international affairs and one rooted in improving and safeguarding the welfare of its citizens. Madam President, beyond multilateralism and the Rules-Based Charter of the United Nations, small countries, and especially small island developing countries like Trinidad and Tobago could very well find themselves without due protection and at the mercy of the doctrine “right is might” or rather not “right is might” but the other way around, “might is right”. Attempts at diluting multilateralism and the rules-based order could render us even more vulnerable and rob us of our dignity, sustenance and voice as members of the international community.

Madam President, the hon. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, as part of a Caricom delegation of Prime Ministers, visited the United States of America and participated in talks with the Secretary General of the United Nations on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January of last year, 2019. The Secretary General confirmed that the Government led by President Nicolas Maduro continued to be the sole legitimate Government recognized and seated at the United Nations. The hon. Prime Minister also participated as part of a Caricom delegation in a meeting on the Montevideo Mechanism on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February, 2019, in Uruguay.

This meeting was convened to treat with the internal problems of Venezuela. These initiatives were part of the response of Caricom in the face of the then heightened reality that attempts were being made to intervene in Venezuela militarily and install a new government. Trinidad and Tobago and Caricom's stated position was, and continues to be that the situation within Venezuela needs to be resolved through dialogue by the contending parties and not by external intervention by third parties. Caricom also offered its good offices to bring the parties together to treat with the problem.

Trinidad and Tobago and Caricom States have a stake in maintaining the

Caricom as a zone of peace, given the potentially catastrophic consequences of armed conflict in neighbouring Venezuela.

Madam President, Venezuela withdrew from the Organization of American States on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April in 2017. Venezuela's denunciation of the Rio Treaty took effect on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May, 2013. Venezuela supposed reinstatement of its ratification of the Treaty on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August, 2016, was done by representatives of Mr. Juan Guaidó, the leader of the National Assembly of Venezuela and not by the legitimate Government of Venezuela.

At the 49<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States in Colombia on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, 2019, Trinidad and Tobago reserved its right not to be bound by the resolution AG/CG/document74/17 adopted at the meeting on the situation in Venezuela, and by any decision taken by the OAS which is based on, principally includes, or in any other manner involves the participation of the representatives of Mr. Juan Guaidó reportedly seated as the permanent representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs represented Trinidad and Tobago at the Rio Treaty Meeting in New York on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, 2019. The meeting adopted resolution RC20/RES1/19. Subsequently, the resolution was revised to include Trinidad and Tobago's reservation. The new reference for the resolution is RC30/RES1/19 RES 2.

**5.45 p.m.**

During the vote on the resolution, Trinidad and Tobago abstained, Uruguay voted against, Cuba was absent and the other 16 member states voted in favour of the resolution which invoked the provisions of the Rio Treaty and laid the basis for taking punitive measures against Venezuela. Once again, Trinidad and Tobago reaffirmed that it reserves the right not be bound by any decision adopted in this

resolution by the Thirtieth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Acting as the Consultative Organ in Application of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance which involves the participation of the representatives of the Venezuelan National Assembly, purportedly seated as the permanent representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, nor to recognize this resolution as legally valid or to consider itself bound by the provisions approved on the said date of September the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019.

Trinidad and Tobago was invited to participate in yet another Rio Treaty meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December in Colombia. The purpose of the meeting was to take punitive measures against Venezuela. Trinidad and Tobago decided not to participate in the meeting. Decisions of the Rio Treaty at that meeting included travel restrictions imposed against Vice President of Venezuela, Delcy Rodriguez. Trinidad and Tobago also did not participate in any of the informal or preparatory meetings of the provisional organ of consultation for the session of the Thirtieth Meeting of the Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Colombia on the said day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December.

Madam President, notwithstanding the difficulties within Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago stands on solid ground in being in harmony with the position of the United Nations and the stated position of Caricom in recognizing the Government led by President Nicolás Maduro as the legitimate Government of Venezuela. Given our understanding of the Charter of the United Nations, Trinidad and Tobago does not recognize Mr. Juan Guaidó as the President of Venezuela. To do otherwise would run counter to the stated positions of Caricom and the United Nations.

Madam President, the distortion of the Rio Treaty, a collective self-defence pact to treating with matters internal to Venezuela without the consent or request of that country is questionable and does not sit well with the intended purposes of the

Treaty. Indeed, as the Rio Treaty explicitly informs, none of the provisions of the Treaty shall be construed as impairing the rights and obligations of the high contracting parties under the Charter of the United Nations.

Trinidad and Tobago takes the position that it is not bound by these recent decisions of the Rio Treaty, inclusive of the travel restrictions imposed on the Vice President of Venezuela since it had entered, meaning Trinidad and Tobago had entered, repeatedly so dare I say, in a sustained and consistent manner regarding such decisions at the OAS General Assembly in June of last year and at the meeting of Rio Treaty in September of 2019.

Further, Madam President—

**Madam President:** Minister, your time has expired.

**Sen. The Hon. D. Moses:** Oh, I thought in five minutes you would have alerted me.

**Madam President:** Your 10 minutes has expired.

**Sen. The Hon. D. Moses:** Okay.

**Madam President:** That is it, Minister.

**Sen. The Hon. D. Moses:** I am fine. Many thanks to you. I hope I would have brought clarity. Thanks.