

**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
TRINIDAD
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**Message from His Excellency President George Maxwell Richards TC, CMT, Ph. D,
President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on the Occasion of Independence Day,
2009.**

Fellow Citizens

We celebrate, this year, forty-seven years of Independence, a short period of time in the life of any country. Nevertheless, it is time enough for us to have reaped benefits in many spheres of endeavour, sometimes by trial and error, as we engage in the process of development.

In the year 2009, we have had our share of challenges which, to put a positive interpretation on them, may well be regarded as opportunities for growth, at the individual as well as the collective level.

This is an essential element in nation building, which does not ever proceed without debate and conflict of one sort or another. The important consideration is that our people make common cause in respect of the wellbeing of all who belong to Trinidad and Tobago and pledge allegiance to this country.

Allegiance to our country does not lie, as we all know, only in the things that we say, but more particularly, in the things that we do. But while we place emphasis on the things that we do, we cannot be cavalier about the things that we say. Words can be as destructive as they can be constructive and with them we can create the climate which impels action, one way or another.

It is why it is important how we speak about our country, among ourselves and with others. This does not mean that we must be denied the freedom to criticize, as every citizen has the right to participate in the discourse regarding whatever affects our country. It is a civil right.

Nevertheless, perhaps we can be guided by the idea that family business should remain family business, in this sense: that we should not relish the putting down of ourselves by others, even as we acknowledge, within the family, that we do have issues and work towards solving them.

Perhaps this is a good time to examine what we have accomplished in forty-seven years. We will find that at home and abroad, we have done exceptionally well.

With that in mind, Fellow Citizens, I leave with you these words of our Independence Pledge:

I solemnly pledge to dedicate my life to the service of my God and my country.

I will honour my parents, my teachers, my leaders and my elders and those in authority.

I will be clean and honest in all my thoughts, my words and my deeds.

I will strive in everything I do to work together with my fellowmen of every creed and race

For the greater happiness of all and the honour and glory of my country.

Fellow Citizens, I wish you a Happy Independence Day and may God bless our nation.