



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT

by

The Honourable Paula Gopee-Scoon
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of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

in the
General Debate of the 63rd Session
of the United Nations
General Assembly

New York
Saturday 27th September, 2008

Mr. President,

I am honoured to be afforded the opportunity to address this 63rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I also wish, Mr. President, to extend to you my sincere congratulations on your assumption to the Presidency.

I am convinced, that the wealth of experience garnered over the years in the different capacities in which you have served, and your strong conviction of the importance of multilateralism and respect for international law, will be brought to bear, in a most positive and productive way on the proceedings of this session. Further, Trinidad and Tobago is gratified that Nicaragua, and by extension, Central America, has been graced with the distinct honour of guiding the work of the 63rd Session.

Mr. President, my delegation at the same time, wishes to express our heartfelt appreciation and admiration for the way in which His Excellency Srgjan Kerim of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia conducted the affairs of this august body during the last session.

The Secretary-General must also be commended particularly for his untiring efforts in ensuring that humanitarian relief is brought to thousands of victims of natural disasters, including in the Caribbean. Given the increasing frequency and ferocity of hurricanes and other similar climatic phenomena, there is dire need for the provision of early warning systems and capacity-building programmes in vulnerable regions, like the Caribbean, aimed at enhancing planning and preparedness and mitigating the effects of such disasters. We applaud all efforts to bring relief to those affected.

These recent disasters bring into sharp focus the imperative of purposeful action on the problems of climate change, at the national, regional and international levels. Trinidad and Tobago is committed to adopting concrete measures aimed at reducing its levels of greenhouse gas emissions, while at the same time promoting balanced industrialization and environmental sustainability. Notwithstanding its current healthy endowment of hydrocarbon resources, Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the need to promote clean energy alternatives, the development of new and renewable energy options and the proper protection and management of the nation's forests. Indeed, the Government is putting into effect appropriate policies for substantial results in this area. We hope to achieve meaningful progress, in cooperation with development partners within the public and private sectors, both locally and internationally and civil society.

Mr. President,

Cooperation at the international level is also indispensable to efforts aimed at addressing the current energy crisis. Trinidad and Tobago is seeking to partner with its African friends, to among other things, identify ways of developing long-term strategies for the sustainable development and utilisation of their energy resources. This is in keeping with the pledge made by the Honourable Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad

and Tobago, in 2007, when he addressed the Eighth Summit of the African Union in Ethiopia. Since then, discussions have ensued with individual African States and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), to advance this initiative. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is eager to work assiduously towards the attainment of our common objectives.

Mr. President,

Trinidad and Tobago firmly believes that the United Nations must take the lead in the management of the global food crisis, in which we are confronted with a situation of losing thousands to hunger on an almost daily basis. We embrace the various multilateral initiatives to address this grave challenge, including the establishment by the Secretary-General of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis in April of this year and the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan of Action.

The eradication of extreme poverty and hunger is one of the Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015. We cannot allow the threat of this global food crisis to reverse the strides made, so far, by many developing countries to achieve this goal. We must utilize all resources at our disposal, including a recommitment to the Food and Agricultural Organization, which was established to help developing countries and countries in transition, modernize and improve agriculture and fisheries practices and to ensure good nutrition for their citizens. We must work in concert to provide that institution with the necessary resources to discharge effectively its mandates. If we fail to win the war against this common enemy, we would be compromising the right to food and by extension the right to life of millions of people.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has embraced a number of key policy initiatives that are designed to guarantee access to food of sufficient quality and quantity to our citizens and reduce the impact of the food crisis. Thousands of acres have been made available for diversified agriculture production. In addition, capital is accessible to farmers through the national Agricultural Development Bank.

Mr. President,

Trinidad and Tobago recognizes that food security must also be pursued in the context of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME), which provides the opportunity for the integration of production and cross border investment in agricultural production in those countries which have greater agricultural potential and resources. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago therefore jointly hosted with the CARICOM Secretariat and the Food and Agriculture Organization, a Regional Agriculture Donor Conference in June 2007.

Similarly, Mr. President, like poverty and hunger, terrorism remains a major scourge on our societies and poses a dire threat to democratic institutions. It undermines the rule of law, infringes human rights and generally affects the well-being of its victims. Trinidad and Tobago is convinced that members of the international community must embrace multilateral solutions

in the fight against terrorism. We remain committed to the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, which is complementary to our own efforts to combat terrorism.

Mr. President,

Trinidad and Tobago views the reform of the Security Council as indispensable to the transformation and further democratization of the United Nations. As a small island developing State, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to reiterate its position on Security Council reform, which emphasizes the need for, among other things, equity of access for small States in the Security Council and the need for representation of all Regions of the world in its permanent membership. Failure to reform the Security Council could serve to undermine that organ's authority as the agency with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as its ability to discharge its other obligations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Trinidad and Tobago is convinced that the United Nations remains the principal vehicle for meaningful exchanges between members of the international community on matters of international concern. Such deliberations, in our view constitute the bedrock of the democratization of the United Nations system and are for us a priority consideration. We recognize therefore the great value of the informal consultations on System-wide Coherence aimed at making the organization "deliver as one".

Further progress on this issue during this current session is imperative for the United Nations Development system to be able to provide Member States, particularly developing countries, with the assistance required to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the other internationally agreed development goals.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has charted a developmental policy to achieve the MDGs by the stipulated period, as well as to transform the country to developed country status by the year 2020. The pace of economic growth over the last decade has fortunately enabled us to surpass MDG targets in achieving universal primary education and promoting gender equality and empowering of women and a significant reduction in the level of poverty.

Trinidad and Tobago's development strategy, Mr. President, in some respects exceed the MDGs targets. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has been able to provide free secondary and tertiary education to its citizens. In addition, thirty percent (30%) of Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament are women.

Regrettably, for many developing States the achievement of the MDGs by the stipulated period appear to be elusive. We therefore urge all developmental partners to honour their commitments and pledges already agreed upon.

Another important international process to which Trinidad and Tobago attaches great importance is that of the review of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus on

Financing for Development, which will be addressed at a Follow-up International Conference in Doha, Qatar in November. The Monterrey Consensus adopted by Heads of State and Government in 2002 called for the mobilization of resources to assist Developing Countries in meeting the MDGs and recognised the importance of coherence and consistency within and among the international monetary, financial and trading systems in support of overall development. While there have been some advances under the key pillars of financing for development, they have not been sufficiently far-reaching. In light of the current financial crisis, the timing for the convening of the Follow-up Conference is most timely and presents an opportunity for the forging of global partnership in a spirit of solidarity. A key component for success will be an ongoing engagement between Government and all stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society.

Trinidad and Tobago is committed to the regional integration movement of CARICOM and has continued to provide economic assistance to our CARICOM partners within the ambit of that multilateral framework and other bilateral arrangements. One such arrangement, Mr. President, is Trinidad and Tobago's Petroleum Development Fund, a facility which only recently was drawn upon to provide substantial assistance to some of our Caribbean neighbours in the aftermath of recent Hurricanes. Another is the CARICOM Trade Support Programme, a comprehensive loan facility of US\$16.5M, which is aimed at improving the trade capacity of CARICOM States by providing assistance in the diversification of their economies and in improving trade capacity.

Mr. President,

The Caribbean also falls prey to the nefarious trade in narcotics, to which is linked the illegal proliferation of small arms and light weapons. In an effort to confront these challenges, we have concluded with our neighbours the CARICOM Maritime and Air Space Security Cooperation Agreement to protect our borders from illegal activities. We, however, recognize the important role of the United Nations, as the multilateral forum, in providing assistance in areas such as capacity building to augment our own resources. For the States of the Caribbean, a critical aspect of disarmament is the eradication of the illegal trade in small arms. Trinidad and Tobago, therefore, calls for urgent action to complete the work on the elaboration of an Arms Trade Treaty.

In the context of our efforts to address the challenge, we also wish to again call for consideration to be given to the inclusion of international drug trafficking as one of the crimes within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. It is of great significance to us that the very year we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute of the ICC, we also commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since its establishment, the ICC has been able to attract one hundred States Parties, issue arrest warrants and begin trials of persons accused of committing crimes of major concern to the international community. The perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes show flagrant disregard for the human rights of their victims, as well as human rights law and humanitarian law and should not go unpunished.

Mr. President,

The United Nations has played a seminal role in the promotion and development of international law, which has contributed to the maintenance of international peace and security and friendly relations among States. As a small State, we view adherence to, and respect for the rule of law as a bulwark against intrusions, which could affect our territorial integrity, independence, economic development and the general well-being of all of our citizens. We are, however, conscious of the need for international cooperation in the implementation of international legal obligations under various conventions, which provide mutual benefits for Member States.

One area of which the United Nations could be justly proud is the conclusion of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ("the Convention"). The Convention has worked well since its adoption and entry into force and it has provided legal certainty to activities carried out by States in different maritime zones. In keeping with our obligations under that Convention, Trinidad and Tobago is in the process of completing the work on its submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf by May 2009 to extend its continental shelf jurisdiction beyond 200 nautical miles, from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured. We do so with full respect for the sovereign right of other coastal States to make similar submissions to the Commission.

Our Region is home to the International Sea Bed Authority ("the Authority") located in Jamaica. The Authority's mandate is derived from the Convention and it is entrusted with the responsibility to administer the resources of the International Sea Bed Area, which is the "common heritage of mankind". As in previous years we again call on all Members of the Authority to make every effort to attend the meetings of the Authority.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to reaffirm its faith and commitment to multilateralism, both at the regional, hemispheric and international levels. Dialogue among States must always be the preferred option to solve the myriad problems which we face in an increasingly complex international environment. It is in recognition of this importance that Trinidad and Tobago has taken the bold decision to host, in 2009, both the Summit of the Americas and the Conference of Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Nations. Dialogue in these two bodies, which are microcosms of the United Nations, could also influence discussions at the United Nations, an institution which we must continue to transform, guard and protect in order to bequeath to future generations.

I thank you, Mr. President.