



# TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
122 East 42nd Street, 39th Floor • New York, N.Y. 10168 • Tel.: (212) 697-7620 • Fax: (212) 682-3580

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## STATEMENT

by

**Mrs. Cherry Ann Millard-White**

**Chargé d'Affaires**

**Permanent Mission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**

**To the United Nations**

on

**AGENDA ITEM 28: Advancement of Women**

**In the Third Committee**

**Of the 65<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly**



**United Nations Headquarters**

**October 11, 2010**

**Mr. Chairman,**

Trinidad and Tobago aligns itself with the statements made by the distinguished representative of Yemen on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the distinguished representative of Guyana on behalf of the 14 Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), on agenda item 28 on the Advancement of Women.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to the implementation of concrete measures aimed at attaining the Millennium Development Goals, in particular, to achieving Goal 3 which relates to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Consequently, much work has been undertaken to mainstream gender issues, as well as the role of women in and contribution to the development of Trinidad and Tobago. To this end, action has been taken in the area of advocacy and public education so as to create a more gender sensitive society with a greater awareness of women's issues and rights. Policies and legislation, as appropriate, have been put in place in order to effect the Government's plans. Gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women remain a top priority on the national agenda. Further evidence of this could be seen in the development of a draft national policy on Gender and Development. The draft national policy recognises the cross-cutting nature of gender issues and identifies measures aimed at mainstreaming in a comprehensive way, the fundamental contributions of women to national development in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Chairman,**

I can think of no better example to use regarding the advancement and further empowerment of women in Trinidad and Tobago than the vaulting leap through the glass ceiling that was made in my country with the election to Government of our first ever female Prime Minister, the Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar. As a women, she therefore continues the work to strengthen and establish further policies to advance and empower the women of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In keeping with Trinidad and Tobago's obligations in implementing the provisions of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, with regard to eliminating the occurrence of gender based violence, the Government continues to develop initiatives, as well as take action to increase the understanding of women and men of their legal rights and responsibilities, and improve remedies for redress in cases of abuse.

The mass media has been used as a creative medium of promoting gender equality, as well as mutual respect and understanding between both sexes within the public and private spheres. The radio and television programmes entitled "Gender on your agenda" are streamed to the specific target audiences in the national community. One purpose of the programme is to motivate changes in behaviour that could impact changes in societal norms which affect the human rights of women and girls. The "Gender on your agenda" programmes raise public awareness and encourage positive images of both sexes in society, as well as promote non-violent behaviour in situations of conflict. The programmes also focus on the important role played by men in achieving gender equality.

Gender sensitivity and awareness training programmes are also provided for key personnel in relevant agencies, such as the media, court, police, social services, schools, and other institutions.

**Mr. Chairman**

It is well understood that without the relevant legislation and implementation of policies, gender equality and the protection and empowerment of women and girls will not be accomplished. The Government is strongly committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women by promoting gender equity enforced by Equal Opportunity legislation. Trinidad and Tobago has also provided measures in our criminal, civil and administrative laws for the prevention, punishment and eradication of violence against women. They include laws relating to matrimony, domestic violence, legal aid and advice, maternity, cohabitational relationships, family, sexual offences, and occupational safety and health, all of which seek to, among other things, empower and protect female members of society.

**Mr. Chairman**

In the area of employment, approximately 50 programmes have been implemented at regional and community levels which provide training and re-training for low income and unemployed women to earn livelihoods to sustain their families in targeted sectors, such as agriculture, tourism and elderly care. Women are also being trained and employed in non-traditional sectors such as construction and the security forces.

Additionally, work is being done to implement policies which would include allowing women to have flexible working hours in recognition of their dual burden at home and at the workplace. Moreover, efforts are underway to enact legislation to make it mandatory for all public and private enterprises to have private spaces available to mothers who are nursing their children; to combat sexual harassment in the workplace; and to provide equal pay for equal work.

Another notable achievement in the advancement of women in Trinidad and Tobago is the increase in the overall participation of women in national leadership and decision-making processes. The number of women holding seats in the Lower House of Parliament, for example, has increased from 11.1% in 2001 to 28.6% in 2010. Further, women participate and serve in leadership and decision making positions in financial institutions in both the private and public sectors.

In the field of education, Trinidad and Tobago has achieved universal primary school education. At the secondary and tertiary level institutions, males and females have equal access to education. The number of females graduating from these institutions currently exceeds the number of males. However, the statistics have shown that these figures have not translated into employment at all levels. This has been identified as one area in which improvement is required.

#### **Mr. Chairman**

On the issue of improving women's health and their access to health services, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago through Regional Health Authorities and the Tobago House of Assembly, operates a network of hospitals at no cost to citizens, which are easily accessible by women and children living in rural areas. Maternal Health and Support Units are expected to be established at every public health facility in a decentralized health system to provide information and education on the causes, symptoms, treatment and prevention of all diseases and illnesses that affect women. Services will include screening, treatment, medication and counseling for gender specific physical and mental illnesses.

Health related issues act as a deterrent to the advancement and empowerment of women in our society, especially in relation to the role that women play as caregivers to convalescent family members. Therefore, the adverse effects of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs), and also infectious diseases, severely impede a woman's personal and economic advancement.

Therefore, to give greater prominence and focus to the deleterious impact of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and with a view to addressing these issues, the Member States of CARICOM, including Trinidad and Tobago, brought this issue to the attention of the General Assembly in September 2009 and was successful in having the resolution on "Prevention and control of non-communicable diseases", adopted with the support of over 100 Member States. The resolution recognises, among other issues, the socio-economic implications of NCDs on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and calls for a High-level meeting of the General Assembly on non-communicable diseases in September 2011, with the participation of Heads of State and Government.

**Mr. Chairman**

Our country's track record of its commitment to multilateral values and practices must be underscored. We therefore welcome the establishment of UN Women, the new composite entity for gender equality and women's empowerment, and are confident that under the dynamic leadership of Michelle Bachelet, further progress will be made in improving the lives of women and girls worldwide.

Trinidad and Tobago supports CARICOM's continued contribution to the work of the United Nations in advancing and empowering women, through its membership of the Executive Board of the Entity. Trinidad and Tobago therefore requests that Member States support the candidatures of Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the upcoming election of members of the Executive Board of UN Women.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to reaffirm its firm commitment to the advancement and empowerment of women and its recognition of the fundamental role of women in contributing to development in all spheres, as well as to such processes as security and peacebuilding. To this end, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in her contribution during the recently concluded general debate, signaled Trinidad and Tobago's intention to introduce in the First Committee, a draft resolution on "Women, Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-proliferation", for which Trinidad and Tobago hopes to obtain the support of Member States.

Trinidad and Tobago, in its position as current Chair of the Commonwealth of Nations, will also work with other Member States to advance the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005 to 2015, which embodies the Commonwealth's framework for the advancement of women.

I thank you.

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