



# TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**STATEMENT BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY DENNIS FRANCIS  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**AT THE**

**56<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND  
DEVELOPMENT**

**“POPULATION, EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”**

United Nations Headquarters  
New York

11 April 2023

Mr. Chair,

Trinidad and Tobago congratulates you on your assumption of the chairmanship of 56<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Population and Development. We also align with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Cuba on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Trinidad and Tobago also acknowledges the importance of the Reports of the Secretary-General on the theme of this year's session: "*Population, Education and Sustainable Development*".

Mr. Chair,

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to addressing population and development issues and to the integration of these into global processes related to development. In keeping with this commitment, Trinidad and Tobago has aligned its National Development Strategy<sup>1</sup> towards achieving the objectives as set out in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, through a comprehensive, cross-cutting framework as it relates to, *inter alia*, poverty eradication; access to education at all levels; enhancing digital literacy; access to quality healthcare, including reproductive health services as well as infant, child and maternal mortality reduction; gender equality and the empowerment of women; and the provision of services for the elderly and for persons with disabilities.

Mr. Chair,

Trinidad and Tobago has historically invested heavily in the education sector, underscoring education as a policy priority of the Government. In fact, the first theme of our National Development Strategy, *Putting People First: Nurturing our Greatest Assets*, details the framework for developing and harnessing the capacity of our citizens. Against this backdrop, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the inclusion of "education" in the theme of this year's session, recognizing that

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<sup>1</sup> Vision 2030

education and training over the life course are critically important to sustain socio-economic development.

In Trinidad and Tobago, primary and secondary education are both compulsory and free through public schools, to girls and boys, in accordance with the Convention of the Rights of the Child and SDG 4, that is, Quality Education. In recognition of the importance of education and lifelong learning, financial aid is offered to persons seeking tertiary education, through the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses programme.

Moving beyond universal access to education, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has committed to undertake a series of initiatives to improve infrastructure in school; ensure that the education provided at primary, secondary and tertiary levels prepare the youth for the challenging world of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); and equip all schools to benefit from technological innovations, among others.

Mr. Chair,

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago also provides for special needs students and those with learning disabilities. For instance, Trinidad and Tobago has implemented the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) initiative that aims to identify students with the disorder in order to ensure their needs are met. Further, in accordance with SDG 2 on Zero Hunger, Trinidad and Tobago satisfies the needs of primary and secondary school students through the School Feeding Programme. This programme is designed to ensure that children have access to nutritious meals that promote improved academic performance and school attendance.

Mr. Chair,

In Trinidad and Tobago, young people between the ages of 10 and 29 comprise approximately 40% of the population<sup>2</sup>. The Government recognizes youth as central to the development agenda. In this regard, there are numerous initiatives to educate, build resilience and channel the creativity of the youth population to ensure their development and engagement in society.

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<sup>2</sup> Central Statistical Office, 2022

Mr. Chair,

Trinidad and Tobago recognizes that education is a critical driver of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and recognizes that it is essential that all women and girls are afforded the opportunity to access information and knowledge, including access to digital technologies. For instance, the creation of the National Digital Skills Programme in Trinidad and Tobago provides opportunities for citizens to develop their skills and to enable their participation in the digital world. Women and girls account for over 82% of the persons enrolled in the programme<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, there are a number of initiatives in place which seek to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in a range of areas, including by engaging men and boys towards this end.

Mr. Chair,

Education also leads to better health and well-being over the life course. Trinidad and Tobago therefore remains committed to improving the availability and delivery of health care services to its population to address a number of key issues such as primary health care, maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, non-communicable diseases and sexual and reproductive health. For instance, Trinidad and Tobago has developed a National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy which, along with the implementation of the Health and Family Life Education Programme, aims to address issues including age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education.

Mr. Chair,

In conclusion, Trinidad and Tobago takes this opportunity to thank all partners with whom we collaborate to achieve our objectives, in particular the United Nations Population Fund and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean which continue to provide invaluable assistance at the national and regional levels. We also reaffirm our commitment to continue to work at all levels and with all partners to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Programme of Action of the ICPD with a view to achieving our development objectives in order to improve the quality of lives of all.

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<sup>3</sup> CSW67 national statement (2023)

I thank you.