



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

STATEMENT

BY

SENATOR THE HONOURABLE DR. BHOENDRADATT TEWARIE
MINISTER OF PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

AT

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Mr. Chairman

Trinidad and Tobago congratulates you on your assumption of the chairmanship of 47th session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD). We also align with the statements delivered by the representatives of Bolivia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China (G77) and Costa Rica on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Trinidad and Tobago also acknowledges the importance of the Reports of the Secretary-General in monitoring, reviewing and assessing the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

Mr. Chairman

Trinidad and Tobago continues to make significant strides in achieving the objective of the ICPD as it relates to improving the quality of life and well-being of our people in the context of , among other things, efforts aimed at the eradication of poverty, provision of education at all levels, provision of health care, including reproductive health-care services, as well as infant, child and maternal mortality reduction; gender equality and the provision of services for persons with disabilities and the elderly. These policies are in line with the overall objective of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to promote human development as a key pillar for the sustainable development of the entire population and this includes differently-abled adults and children with special needs in schools. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has also established a Ministry for Gender, Youth and Child Development.

However, I wish to point out that the Government of Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar began in 2010 with the preparation of a Human Development Atlas which mapped out the state of human development across our country in 2010. We completed a new census in 2011 so that we could proceed forward with more timely and current data to make policy. The 2011 census told us that we are moving against the global current - instead of increased urbanization, we have de-urbanization, with two new population growth centres in the country, in the Centre and the East. We decided to capitalize on this trend economically by establishing five (5) growth poles to bring jobs and growth to population centres. We also established an agenda for decentralization and devolution of power to local government to spread services and infrastructure development across the country. We have also prepared a national spatial development strategy for the next ten (10) years with a vision for twenty years.

Against this background, permit me, at this juncture, Mr. Chairman to address a few areas on the implementation at the national level of the Programme of Action of the ICPD:

REDUCTION OF POVERTY

The eradication of poverty is a major objective of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Poverty eradication and social justice are part of our seven (7) pillars for sustainable, economic and social development. We are also conscious of our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger and consequently, various social programmes have been implemented in order to achieve our stated goal of reducing poverty by 2% annually. Extreme poverty has been eliminated, street dwellers have been reduced by half and we are meeting our targets for reduction of unemployment which now stands at 3.7%.

As contemplated by the ICPD, we also recognize the importance of partnerships and have collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as well as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) on initiatives related to poverty reduction.

The data shows a 38% drop in the proportion of households living below the poverty line between 1998 and the present time. Currently, a survey of living conditions is being conducted by the Central Statistical Office (CSO) which will give us more up-to-date progress.

EDUCATION

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has also identified that there is a link between education and the reduction of poverty. In this regard, we have surpassed the MDG target of universal primary education and have also achieved universal secondary education. We are also on our way to achieving our goal of 60% tertiary education. Education at all levels is free; and programmes are available which provide textbooks and meals to students, as well as a lap top to every child at the secondary level. With regard to children at risk, we have duly established the Children's Authority and have also established a strong legislative framework for their care.

HEALTH

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago views the provision of health care as an important contributor to human development. Concomitant with this objective, policies have been implemented aimed at reducing infant and maternal mortality; the reduction of risk factors associated with Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) through the promotion of healthy behaviour among children and adolescents. The incidence of reproductive cancers is also being tackled through the provision of HPV vaccinations to prevent cervical cancers and there is a centrally coordinated HIV Unit as well as an HIV Officer assigned to each Ministry. Within the context of the National Performance Framework, Government has reported on these matters to Parliament on progress in 2012, 2013, and will do so again in February 2015 for the year 2014.

Also in relation to health care, Mr. Chairman, the Population Programme Unit of the Ministry of Health has been the major state provider of Sexual and Reproductive Health care services throughout the country. These include fertility management, diagnostic and screening services, as well as contraception and family counseling. The National Family Planning Association also assists with the provision of services to the population, including education on safeguarding against unplanned pregnancies as well as sexually transmitted diseases and infections such as HIV/AIDS and counseling on contraceptive methods. There has been a downward trend in both infant mortality and maternal mortality rates and one of the partnerships with UNICEF is to pursue active measures to achieve global best practice in this area.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GENDER EQUALITY

Trinidad and Tobago is fully committed to the achievement of the goals of gender equality and empowerment of women. These efforts are not only observed in the fields of education

and the workplace, but are also witnessed in many areas of national life, including at the executive and legislative arms of government. Indeed, education enrollment as well as the graduation rate at tertiary level is 66% for women.

You can rest assured, Mr. Chairman, of the unwavering commitment of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to the full and effective implementation of its obligations under the ICPD.

Thank you.