



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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Statement

by

H.E. Mr. Rodney Charles

Ambassador/Permanent Representative of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

at

The 45th session of the Commission on
Population and Development
United Nations Headquarters

April 25, 2012

Mr. Chairman, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship for this session of the Commission, as well as the other members of the bureau on their election. We also express our appreciation to the Secretariat for its efforts in organizing this meeting.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago recognises the important contribution of youth to community and national development. For this and other reasons, and aware of the challenges they continue to face, the Government actively undertakes efforts to ensure the health and well-being of all of citizens, including the adolescent and youth population. The theme of this year's session of the Commission - "Adolescents and Youth" - is therefore, in my delegation's view, both timely and relevant.

Mr. Chairman, Trinidad and Tobago strives to protect the rights of all of its citizens, including its adolescents and youth. This is reflected, inter alia, in our implementation of the provisions of the International Conventions to which we are a State Party, as well as other international programmes of action which we have endorsed.

Mr. Chairman, we agree with other delegations that adolescence is a crucial stage in an individual's life and that decisions made in that period profoundly impact the individual's future. Consequently, the Government has invested significantly in education, as well as skills development, to ensure that adolescents and youth are knowledgeable; able to make informed choices; lead meaningful, productive and enjoyable lives and contribute to sustainable development. To this end, primary education is compulsory and available at no cost; and secondary and tertiary education are also available at no cost to students. Furthermore, there are various programmes which provide text books and meals to students, as well as grants to families in need for the purchase of other relevant supplies to facilitate the obtainment of a sound education.

Mr. Chairman, it is true that health, including sexual and reproductive health, as well as access to full and productive employment and decent work, are equally fundamental to the well-being of younger members of society to allow them to realise their fullest potential. In relation to health, the Population Programme Unit at the Ministry of Health, established in 1969, has been the major provider of Sexual and Reproductive Health services throughout the country.

These include, inter alia, fertility management, diagnostic and screening services, contraception, and family counselling. That Ministry is also currently undergoing a transition which will result in the continued provision of sustainable, cost free services, as well as an expansion of the sexual and reproductive health services programme. Additional services will be provided in the future specifically to the adolescent and youth population. The Ministry also continues to embrace opportunities to generally increase the services available.

Currently, there is a national family planning association which assists in providing information to the population, including to adolescents and youths on, inter alia, issues related to sexual and reproductive health; safeguarding against undesired pregnancies as well as sexually transmitted diseases and infections such as HIV/AIDS; and which provides counselling services in relation to the latter, contraceptive methods and sexual and reproductive health issues in general.

Mr. Chairman, it is imperative that youth are embraced as key partners in the advancement and development of our societies and included in decision-making processes so that they become and remain actively engaged in decisions which ultimately affect their future. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has embarked on a number of initiatives to this end within recent times. We intend to continue developing this invaluable partnership with the aim of ensuring that we effectively address the challenges which affect our adolescents and youth and provide them with an environment in which they can fully enjoy their rights.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to continued cooperation with regional and international partners as we work together to empower our adolescents and youth, as well as to ensure that they have the opportunity to realise their fullest potential and contribute invaluablely to community and national development.

I thank you