



National Statement

by

**Her Excellency Penelope Beckles,
Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the
United Nations**

**at the
52nd session of the Commission on Population and
Development**

“Review and appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

United Nations Headquarters, New York

1-5 April 2019

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Mr. Chair,

At the outset, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to align itself with the statement delivered by the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Allow me to first convey my sincerest congratulations to you, my CARICOM colleague on your election as Chairman, as well as to the other bureau members, having been elected for this, the 57th session, of the Commission on Population and Development.

Mr. Chair,

Historically, Trinidad and Tobago has been an active contributor to the international dialogue on population and development issues, which is evident in our adoption of the Programme of Action of the ICPD in Cairo, Egypt in 1994, as well as our participation in the ICPD Beyond 2014 Review Process.

In keeping with this commitment, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has aligned its National Development Strategy, towards achieving the objectives as set out in the ICPD Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through a comprehensive, cross-cutting framework.

Mr. Chair,

Trinidad and Tobago's population is estimated 1.3 million with a growth rate of less than 0.5% per annum and approximately 13 percent of the population age 60 years and over. This in itself is a major challenge for us. A reduced working-age population represents lower production and tax revenues

available to facilitate public investment requirements as well as limits expenditure on health, social care and pensions.

In this regard, the Government has recognized that these demographic characteristics are critical drivers in determining our policy responses to health care, education, housing, labour, pensions and social security. It also brings to the fore, the economic and social costs associated with an aging population.

Furthermore, Trinidad and Tobago remains vulnerable to other development challenges. These include substantial dependence on revenues generated from the oil and gas sector; effects of climate change; encroachment of urban development on agricultural and environmentally zoned regions; and despite significant improvements in the education system at all levels, there is continuation of the brain drain.

We have therefore acknowledged the necessity for continued sustainable planning aimed at addressing our demographic realities in coherence with these other development challenges.

Mr. Chair,

Despite these challenges, Trinidad and Tobago has made tremendous progress within the last few years. Of note, is the ratification of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the establishment of the Children's Authority in 2015. More recently, a Family and Children Division of the High Court was established, commencing sittings in February 2018.

Another key achievement is the increase in the legal age of marriage to 18 years, effectively outlawing child marriage in Trinidad and Tobago. Progress has also been made through the completion of a National Child Policy (NCP) as well as the designs for a National Children's Registry. Further, a new National Youth Policy is being developed along with an Adolescent Health Strategy.

With respect to Ageing, a National Ageing Policy was developed, two (2) palliative care centres were established and national insurance contributions were increased to strengthen the level of support given to retirees.

Taking into consideration, sexual and reproductive health services, UNFPA launched a "Youth Connect" mobile app in Trinidad and Tobago, enabling young persons, ages 18 – 25, to access SRH care. In addition, a draft Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy was developed. In 2016, the Trinidad and Tobago Central Registry on Domestic Violence was launched and a few weeks ago, a National Workplace Policy on Sexual Harassment was laid in parliament.

Mr. Chair,

I am happy to inform that Trinidad and Tobago has recorded a decrease in the Maternal Mortality Rate with zero maternal deaths for the first half of 2018. While universal health care is offered at no cost through the public health care system, the Government continues to take measures to improve access to health services. In 2017, a Directorate of Women's Health was established to implement policies that specifically target and bring about improvement to women's healthcare issues.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to achieving gender equality and continues to undertake initiatives to create opportunities for women and girls to achieve their full potential.

Mr. Chair,

In recognition that our people is our greatest asset, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has introduced a broad spectrum of initiatives aimed at eliminating poverty, vulnerability, inequality and discrimination. In this regard, policies on poverty reduction, Local Government reform, and disaster relief are being developed, in conjunction with legislation to facilitate devolution of planning and development control, as well as strategies aimed at increasing accessibility to ICTs.

Further, as we work to ensure that international migration issues are integrated into global, regional and national agendas and strategies, the foundation is also being laid to develop a Migration Policy for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chair,

Although Trinidad and Tobago has made these significant strides in fulfilling its commitments to population issues, complex issues such as inadequate data collection and analysis, financial constraints, as well as unwillingness to change tradition and culture, continue to impede the rate of implementation.

In spite of the these challenges, the Government remains steadfast in the adoption of strategies and initiatives in alignment with our national laws,

policies and priorities that contribute to the successful implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD.

In this respect, I wish to reiterate Trinidad and Tobago's unwavering continued commitment to an integrated and collaborative approach, improved partnerships and networking at all levels as we recognize the inextricable link between population and development and the attainment of sustainable development.

Thank you.