



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
TO THE UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK**

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OPENING STATEMENT

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY DENNIS FRANCIS,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE AND CANDIDATE OF
THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**INFORMAL INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE CANDIDATE FOR THE
POSITION OF PRESIDENT OF THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

12 May 2023
Trusteeship Council Chamber
United Nations Headquarters, New York

Thank you,

Mr. President of the General Assembly,

I am humbled to have been nominated by my government, and endorsed by my regional Group, GRULAC, for the office of President of the Seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your astute leadership and management of the General Assembly during the current session and express my profound gratitude to you for convening this important interactive dialogue, which I believe to be a necessary steppingstone to the election on 1st June.

I commence this discussion by underscoring and reiterating that the overarching goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs is to **LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND**. This is the commitment that we, the international community, gave to our citizens in every corner of the globe in 2015, with the intention of eliminating extreme poverty, ending hunger, ensuring healthy lives, providing quality education, respecting human rights and human dignity, achieving gender equality as well as attaining peaceful and inclusive societies through decisive action in respect of people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership.

In that context and in conceptualizing the main thrust of my Presidency, if elected, I have chosen as my watchwords **“Peace, Prosperity, Progress and Sustainability”**. I am convinced that they constitute the four supreme objectives before the international community, at this juncture; objectives which if successfully accomplished, would significantly alter the current trajectory of disappointment and disillusionment along which tragically, we are seen to be proceeding.

My dear colleagues,

Peace continues to elude us as much without, as within, and as such, our responses must be grounded in a more robust multilateralism that is most importantly, people centered.

As a community of nations built on the concept of collective security, we should aspire to work together to ensure inclusivity and that all voices whether big or small, powerful or otherwise are heard. The abandonment or repudiation of collective security will inevitably render the world more unsafe, more insecure and more unpredictable.

We must recognize that being in a state of peace is not necessarily the same as the absence of war. Peace requires an all-out commitment. It requires constant nurturing, even during times when there are no hostilities, because it is during times of peace that the human spirit challenges itself to create new outlooks and possibilities, indeed, to soar to new heights of expression and achievement.

As the successors of this exceptional organization, we must therefore hold fast to the founding principles and values of the Charter of the United Nations and honour its pledge to future generations.

The UN membership has acknowledged that the Security Council ought to be more representative of the current realities of international politics and should, therefore, be made fit for purpose. Accordingly, it is important that we continue to build understanding and momentum in the ongoing conversations on the reform of the Council.

The adoption of the resolution on the use of the veto in the 76th session constituted an important pioneering step forward in illuminating the decision by any member of the P-5 to invoke the veto in the Security Council. By this action alone, the General Assembly introduced a welcome element of transparency on the use of the veto. In this regard, my

Presidency will continue to explore and promote initiatives, such as these, geared towards enhanced transparency and accountability in the interest of attaining sustainable peace and security, which, we all know, is the lynchpin for achieving virtually every other pillar of humanitarian endeavour enmeshed in the concept of sustainable development.

As human beings and as adherents to and agents of peace, we must work together to rekindle within and among us, that unique spirit of conciliation that recommends and supports the perennial choice of dialogue and negotiation over conflict and war, and thus, to build and recast perhaps a new, more dynamic multilateralism, apt to our times.

Colleagues,

The pervasive impacts of the challenges associated with climate change and instability have placed extraordinary strain on our economies and societies and have created alarming consequences for people across the globe, especially the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable. As these crises prolong, poverty worsens, and inequality widens across the world.

We need action, now more than ever, to reach and to help those furthest behind, especially for those countries in special situations. During my tenure, I will provide the necessary support to facilitate the full and effective implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries, as well as the upcoming Third International Conference on Land-locked Developing Countries and the Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to be held in 2024, as these conferences are crucial opportunities to call for the scaling up of the necessary support required to ensure that no one is left behind.

The SDG Summit during High level Week this year will also be a defining moment as the Summit is the ideal opportunity for Heads of State and Government to definitively demonstrate real commitment towards the SDGs. The proposed convening of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development will be prioritized, as we aim to

strengthen actions towards enhancing financing, technology, debt sustainability and capacity-building to underwrite sustainable development.

During the 78th session, it is my intention to encourage deeper deliberations and incisive decision-making by the General Assembly in respect of *“Our Common Agenda”*, including, inter alia, the Summit of the Future, reform of the international financial architecture and the development of the Global Digital Compact.

It is bewildering that only half of humankind participates meaningfully in the economic and social life of the society; women and girls, often being systematically denied their basic human rights in many spheres of everyday life, including though not limited to, the right to an education, the right to seek employment, the right to receive equal pay and the right to ownership of land. Moreover, the world continues to witness an epidemic of violence against women and the wanton exploitation of children.

Consequently, our efforts must emphasize the continuous need for investment in our children; our future; so to ensure that they have access to quality learning opportunities and skills development programmes, proper nutrition, health care, clean and safe water, protection and shelter.

It is also quite alarming that in the twenty first century fundamental human rights are being denied to individuals and groups, based on race, religion or ethnicity and other forms of discrimination, creating all too often a marginalized, dehumanized underclass, disallowed by society from exercising their inalienable rights as human beings and thus, engendering deep-seated resentment that often culminates in the form of social strife and inter-group rivalry.

As we approach the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the General Assembly must redouble its efforts and its rhetoric to halt the insidious spread

of human rights violations, based on the truism that we are all created equal and vested at birth with an innate, indivisible set of human rights. In these times, we must more effectively use the platform of the General Assembly to lead on and indeed, to inspire wider societal adherence to the principles of equality, equal rights and non-discrimination as legitimate social norms and as the building blocks for strong, cohesive and just societies.

It is also imperative that we intensify our efforts aimed at the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly, in order to better position it to discharge its role and authority, more effectively and efficiently.

Also, in recognizing the key role that young people play in our aspirations towards the achievement of sustainable development, it is my intention to continue the PGA's fellowship programme and to work with the Secretariat in the operationalization of the UN Youth Office to ensure the meaningful engagement of youth in our work.

If privileged to sit as PGA, I will continue to strongly advocate for the full and meaningful engagement and inclusion of women in all spheres, which will inevitably heighten the prospects for sustainable peace, prosperity, progress and indeed sustainability. Certainly, I commit to you now that the staffing of the Office of the President of the General Assembly will respect and honour that principle.

Last year's historic recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right, reinforces that the General Assembly has a key role to play in protecting our global commons by boosting global efforts towards greater climate action, restoring ecosystems, protecting the oceans, combatting desertification and land degradation and promoting zero-waste. Mindful that we are in an era of growing food insecurity, focused attention must be given to the mechanics of enhancing soil and land productivity, if the planet is to support the 9.5 billion population projected to live on it by 2050.

I will therefore continue this drive to urge Member States to undertake bold progressive action by investing in the maintenance and restoration of the ecological balance in our planetary systems and so, promote their long-term sustainability for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

Multilateralism's uniqueness resides in the enhanced prospect and better advantage it offers us in finding global consensus to address and often to resolve complex global challenges, quite beyond the capacity of unilateral sovereign action to answer. In that regard, I commit to be a bridge-builder, to foster dialogue and to promote inclusivity among all stakeholders. If elected, I will solemnly pledge to uphold the code of ethics of the President of the General Assembly and in so doing, I commit to discharge the responsibilities of that Office with transparency, accountability, vigor and dedication to that most cherished value, multilateralism, which in large measure unites us all, even if we may not always agree on the pathway to get us to our final destination.

Building upon the successes of my predecessors, the office of the PGA will be a microcosm of the UN, and while the constitution of the staffing will take into consideration the mandates as well as the priorities for the upcoming session, equitable geographical representation and gender parity will be prioritized. Additionally, it is my intention to have at least one person on my team and another in the youth fellowship programme, from the differently abled community.

I am also determined to work closely with the General Committee and the Chairs of the Main Committees, as well as to conduct regular consultations with the wider membership, in various formats including, regional groups and sub-groups. In acknowledging the practical value of interactions between the President of the General Assembly and the Heads of the UN specialized agencies, I am committed to having fullsome exchanges in order to ensure

that there is clarity of priorities and the strengthening of common purpose in the interest of coherence and efficiency.

I will work dutifully to bring forward a renewed atmosphere of conciliation, cooperation and shared commitment in addressing the many challenges and seizing every opportunity, however nascent, before the General Assembly. I will seek to enhance current approaches and adopt new ones, that can create probable solutions that will benefit all, as we work diligently to deliver or at the very least, to strengthen the bases for delivering **Peace, Prosperity, Progress and Sustainability**.

I trust that I can count on your support and active engagement in accompanying me on this crusade for sustainable global development, so that all citizens of the world, that is, "We **the Peoples of the United Nations**" can live in larger freedom, free from want and free from fear.

I Thank You, Mr. President.