



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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STATEMENT

By

The Honourable Winston Dookeran,

Minister of Foreign Affairs

of the

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago,

at the

High-Level Meeting

on the

Rule of Law at the National and

International Levels,

**United Nations Headquarters,
24 September, 2012**

Mr. President

Secretary-General

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

This High-level meeting on the Rule of Law is a timely expression of the principal premise on which the Charter of the United Nations is predicated.

It is a principle that is the cornerstone for the conduct of international relations amongst States and the anchor of the quest for good governance within our nations.

The path to growth and development, the promotion of human rights and the policy strategy to tackle issues like climate change, poverty, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts are dependent on adherence to the rule of law.

In the midst of the global economic and financial crisis, the challenge of good governance in an increasingly diverse society and the search for sustainable peace, observance of the rule of law offers the most durable and reliable basis for lasting solutions.

Indeed, deficit in the practice of the rule of law exists.

We have a golden opportunity to work together to address this implementation deficit in fulfilling our domestic and international legal obligations which has impacted on the maintenance of the rule of law.

Mr. President

Trinidad and Tobago acknowledges that strengthening of the rule of law lies primarily with individual Member States.

Consequently, our Republican Constitution recognizes that the rule of law lies at the heart of the social contract which subsists between the State and its citizens.

The fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual are protected and entrenched in our Constitution without discrimination by reason of race, origin, colour, religion or sex.

Provisions relating to equality before the law and the protection of the law are also safeguarded under the supreme law of Trinidad and Tobago.

Moreover, these are buttressed by the various international human rights and other instruments to which Trinidad and Tobago is a State Party.

Additionally, our institutions or entities, whether public or private, are accountable to and not above the law and disputes are adjudicated by an independent judiciary which is free from the influence or control of the Executive and Parliament.

Notwithstanding our efforts over the last fifty years as an independent nation, Trinidad and Tobago also recognizes the interdependence between the rule of law at the national and international levels.

This is the cardinal principle on which we conduct our foreign relations whether in the bilateral or multilateral spheres. Adherence to the rule of law has also inspired us to establish very productive relationships with countries in our sub-region, hemisphere and further afield, through the conclusion of several initiatives geared towards the achievement of sustainable economic and social development of our people.

One of the most important of these schemes is the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, establishing the Caribbean Community, including the CARICOM Single Market and Economy.

Mr. President

We robustly support the Affirmation of Commonwealth Values and Principles, which was adopted by Commonwealth Heads of Government at their Meeting held in Trinidad and Tobago in 2009.

This affirmation, among other things, indicates that “... *access to justice and an independent judiciary are fundamental to the rule of law, enhanced by effective, transparent, ethical and accountable governance*”.

Trinidad and Tobago, as a founding State, of the International Criminal Court (“the ICC”) also asserts that all States are obligated to investigate and, where there is sufficient admissible evidence, prosecute persons accused of crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court.

To that end, we have enacted legislation to give full effect domestically to the provisions of the Rome Statute, in order to prevent impunity for the perpetrators of these crimes, thereby, protecting the rule of law.

Mr. President

The rule of law is indispensable to the achievement of the three main pillars of the United Nations; peace and security, human rights and development.

Accordingly, this meeting must adopt a strong Declaration which promotes the rule of law through effective coordination between the United Nations, Member States and other stakeholders.

A necessary feature of such collaboration must be the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building to developing countries to assist them in implementing their respective international obligations.

Trinidad and Tobago also supports calls for the Secretary-General to put the necessary measures in place to enable the General Assembly to engage in follow-up work with a view to developing a comprehensive approach to strengthen the rule of law both at the national and international levels.

I pledge the support of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to work more closely with the United Nations and other partners to combat the illicit trade in narcotics, small arms and light weapons, as well as other transnational organized crimes which pose a serious threat to the rule of law within the CARICOM region, and hence to the peace, security and stability of the region.

Thank you.