



# TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
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## STATEMENT

by

Mrs. Cherry Ann Millard White  
Counsellor

at the

Thirty-first session of the  
Committee on Information

United Nations,  
New York  
May 5, 2009

Mr. Chairman,

Since this is the first occasion on which the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago is taking the floor in this Thirty-first session of the Committee on Information, allow me to congratulate you and other members of the Bureau most warmly on your election as Chairman of the Committee. Please be assured of the full support of the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago in the conduct of the work of this Committee. We are confident that your leadership and diplomatic skills will guide the deliberations of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Distinguished Representative of Sudan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

We wish to thank most sincerely, Mr. Kiyotaka Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and Communication and other staff of the DPI for the insightful overview of the work of the DPI, as well as for the information provided about the Department's future plans and projects in the areas of its strategic communications services, news services, and outreach services, contained in documents A/AC.198/2009/2, 3 and 4.

The Department plays a critical role in disseminating to a growing global audience and in particular to students and youth groups the various activities in which the United Nations is engaged in such major areas as the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, HIV / AIDS, the needs of the African continent, as well as calling attention to and informing about work of the United Nations in the current issues such as the global economic and financial crisis, the energy and food crisis and climate change. It is understood that there are very real challenges the United Nations confronts in discharging its global duties and responsibilities, and the DPI in discharging its mandate also needs to bring these to the world's attention.

Trinidad and Tobago is indeed pleased that the Committee on Information continues to discharge fully and effectively its oversight role of the important and vital work of the Department of Public Information.

While it may be expected that in the next five years, the Internet will become a primary driver of communication as the use of the internet grows throughout the world as the Internet

becomes a popular communication tool, we must be mindful, however, that for the vast majority of peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean the most relevant medium for receiving information is through the more traditional means of print and electronic media including radio. Trinidad and Tobago, therefore, support the continued production and dissemination of the Caribbean media programmes on activities in the UN system through the traditional media formats.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In respect of traditional media and the news media, Trinidad and Tobago welcome the efforts of the DPI to disseminate programmes directly to broadcasting stations and to produce and disseminate television news video and feature material to broadcasters all over the world through satellite distribution and web delivery, including e-transmissions from the United Nations Information Centre for the Caribbean to the UN Headquarters.

The UN Information Centre for the Caribbean in Port of Spain, Trinidad disseminates and services the information needs of 19 English and Dutch speaking Member States throughout the CARICOM sub-region. Its geographic area of responsibility spans the territories of the Caribbean Sea Basin from Belize in the West to Suriname in the East and encompassing Jamaica and the states of the Eastern Caribbean. Its projected audience consists of a population of approximately 6.8 million, excluding Haitian creole speaking Haiti.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago continues to underwrite the rental cost of the UNIC's office space, thus allowing the Centre in Port of Spain to utilize its annual budget allocation from the UN to carry out more effectively its communication goals by engaging in more pro-active outreach and by delivering information products and services to the countries of the Caribbean that fall within its area of responsibility.

This allocation has, to a large extent, enabled the staff of the UNIC, in particular, the Director, the National Information Officer and Library Assistant to undertake a programme of visits to the various capitals within the sub-region (*Antigua, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and St Lucia*) during the period August 2007 to December 2008, with a view to delivering a more robust programme in the sub region in order to place the UN story and critical issues on the agenda of the Sub-regional media, build partnerships and network with media practitioners and managers.

**Mr. Chairman,**



As a reflection of its growing presence in the region, the UNIC launched the **GEO-4 report** through its media cluster. This is a format that is popular with the print media as it allows UNIC to facilitate access of a small group of journalist to prominent figures or expert in the region for in-depth discussion and analysis. UNIC has hosted a regional workshop on Human Rights with an emphasis on rights of the child.

The Centre's information technology has been boosted through updating its website as well as brochures. E-Information Kits are being produced on selected themes and digitized for easier, more cost effective and user-friendly dissemination. A notable output of UNIC public outreach thrust continues to be evident in its hosting of Model United Nations as well as the observance of other significant UN commemorated events for example, International Women's Day, World Press Freedom Day, International Day of UN Peacekeepers, and UN Human Rights Day.

In consideration of the overarching context of System-wide coherence discussions during this debate have focused on the importance of raising the efficiency of the UN information centres in view of its resource capacity. Also highlighted have been elements of the report of the **Office of Internal Oversight Services** concerning the possibility of coordination of the information activities of UNICs, the UN Resident Coordinators Office and UN field missions as well as elimination of duplication in capacities and output. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to remind that the UNIC in the Caribbean sub-region operates with a small staff, limited resources and as empirical evidence suggests the Centre is stretched to capacity in serving an area covering a wide geographic spread of over 2.8 million sq.km.

At this point, the Trinidad and Tobago would welcome the widest possible circulation of the Report of the **Office of Internal Oversight Services** to members of the COI so as to be in a position to provide informed commentary on the proposals raised therein.

DPI needs to review on a continuous basis the allocation of both staff and financial resources to UN Information Centres in developing countries and, in this regard, must provide with the necessary budgetary resources if it is to discharge fully and faithfully its mandate of bringing the world's attention to the many activities in which the UN is engaged and which are of vital importance in ensuring broad support for the goals and objectives of the UN among its many publics worldwide. It is hoped that adequate budget resources would be made available to DPI so that it can discharge effectively the many mandate is has been given by the General Assembly.

Mr. Chariman,

Trinidad and Tobago wishes to acknowledge most sincerely the support of the DPI in connection with the observance of the commemoration of the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade at UN Headquarters in New York, in March 2009. DPI was instrumental in mounting the event entitled: **"Breaking the Silence Beating the Drum"** that showcased the music of the African diaspora, for whose ancestors music and dance were important acts of resistance. The event demonstrated the continuum of their popular art forms in the different genre whose roots originated in Africa, and transcended slavery to survive in contemporary art forms and structures in the modern era.