

STATEMENT BY TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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**Statement by His Excellency Mr Winston Moore,
Ambassador of Trinidad and Tobago to Brazil on the Occasion of
The Eleventh Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and
Development (UNCTAD XI), 16 June 2004**

Thank you, Mr President

Your Excellencies, Heads of Delegation

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

It is an honour for me to address this gathering today on the occasion of the Eleventh Session of UNCTAD and, particularly during the commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of UNCTAD. I congratulate the Secretary General and staff of UNCTAD and extend to you the sincere wish for your continued success.

I also wish to express my delegation's appreciation to the Government of Brazil and the Sao Paulo authorities for hosting this Eleventh Session of UNCTAD and for the very warm welcome we have received.

Mr President, this conference comes at a critical time for developing countries as we deal with decisive issues in multilateral trade which will reshape global economic and trade relations and as a result, have long-term economic and social effects, some good-and, possibly, some very undesirable.

Consequently, at the conclusion of this Eleventh Session there must be the reaffirmation of UNCTAD's mandate and its continued focus on strategies that address the specific challenges faced by developing countries through globalisation, the severe resource limitations of some developing countries for addressing these challenges and the attendant problems caused by such limitations.

We note that the Bangkok Plan of Action agreed at the Tenth Session of UNCTAD continues to be relevant and it is my delegation's hope that we are able to build on that work at this Session of the Conference.

Developing countries need to pursue appropriate trade and economic policies and measures that would enable them to gain substantially from international trade and reduce their vulnerability to external shocks. Moreover, countries need to develop and adopt strategies that enable them to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the existing preferential access arrangements with respect to developed country markets. But there must be a balanced approach that takes into account development goals, obligations under international agreements and available resources. In this regard, Mr President the theme of this year's Conference is most pertinent

One cannot deny that globalisation presents a wealth of opportunities for all countries and that the effects of globalisation are boundless. However, the reality is that far too many countries are unable to participate effectively in world trade and are too vulnerable to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by globalisation.

Some countries are also unable to participate meaningfully in the process of globalisation, making little or no contribution to how it is shaped. The challenge is for us to find a way to bring the promised gains of globalisation to all countries in the global trading system.

Certainly there are lessons to be learned from the experiences of developed countries and, indeed, from developing countries, which have achieved some measure of success in securing the promised gains from globalisation. However, while some developing countries may have been able to create opportunities for themselves and reap some benefits from globalisation, there is still the need for an approach that facilitates more equitable distribution of these potential benefits.

Mr President, like many other developing countries, Trinidad and Tobago is seeking to enhance its international trade performance and increase its competitiveness. Essential to the achievement of this goal, is the development of the capabilities and the capacity to increase productivity and growth through concerted innovation and learning; improvement in the country's technical and institutional capacity to implement trade agreements and strengthen and, where necessary, development of the relevant legal and institutional frameworks. In addition, it is recognised that an enabling environment is needed.

It is understood that developing countries must work towards the development of sound macroeconomic policies and have clear development goals and objectives. It is also understood that Governments have the responsibility to adhere to the rules and regulations of international and multilateral agreements to which they become parties.

Having said that, Mr President, it must be emphasised that Governments must retain the right to manage their participation in world trade and develop policies and strategies that would promote development. The retention of this right, however, does not suggest that Governments should disregard their responsibilities and commitments under multilateral agreements.

Official Development Assistance is an important element in helping developing countries to meet the challenges they face, but its effect is limited if it is not part of an approach that encompasses policy space for the pursuit of national development strategies that would create a more stable environment.

An increase in the flow of foreign direct investment to developing countries is also needed, but this is more likely to occur in stable political and economic environments.

Official development assistance and foreign direct investment must be seen, therefore, as part of a wider set of initiatives and activities that must function along with other elements, specifically, the development-oriented work undertaken by international organisations, that focus on the needs of developing countries.

In this regard, the work of UNCTAD in the areas of consensus building, policy research and analysis, and technical assistance as well as the support provided towards the implementation of decisions taken at international meetings and conferences are invaluable.

As the theme of this Conference states, Mr President, coherence is the key. The challenge is, strengthening and sustaining that coherence.

We are all aware that, as the United Nations focal point for the "integrated treatment of trade and development", UNCTAD is well placed to provide much needed technical assistance and capacity-building activities to developing countries in such areas as trade and finance, technology, investment, sustainable development and international trade.

On its own, however, UNCTAD's reach would be limited. My delegation would like to recommend that UNCTAD should continue to work along with partners, especially those in developing countries, including government agencies and business and tertiary level education institutions, for broadening and deepening the reach of available technical assistance. This approach would assist both human resource development and institutional capacity building.

While it is recognised that partnerships are useful and, indeed, are to be encouraged in developing and implementing technical assistance and capacity building programmes, the work of UNCTAD must not be compromised, nor must it be subordinated in any way to that of other international organisations.

Mr President, other ongoing concerns such as poverty reduction, gender mainstreaming with respect to the development of trade and economic policies and the development of productive enterprises must also be addressed, as the globalisation process continues to evolve; and we look forward to strengthened resources in furtherance of the work of UNCTAD in these areas.

As other delegations have indicated, Mr President, the work of UNCTAD continues to be relevant. No other international organisation is as focused on the needs and concerns of developing countries in the areas mentioned which are critical to the achievement of these countries' development goals and objectives.

We commend UNCTAD for the work it carries out on behalf of developing countries and look forward to its continued commitment to fulfilling its mandate for the successful participation of these countries in multilateral trade and their integration into the global economic system.

I thank you, Mr President.