



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT

by

Senator the Honourable Ms. Marlene Coudray
Minister of Gender, Youth and
Child Development
of the
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

in the

Plenary of the 57th Session of the Commission
on the Status of Women

4th – 6th March, 2013
United Nations Headquarters,
New York

Madam Chair,

Allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the bureau on your election, and to express my confidence that under your able leadership, the work of this session will be brought to a successful conclusion.

Trinidad and Tobago aligns itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Cuba on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States(CELAC); and Guyana on behalf of the Caribbean Community(CARICOM).

Madam Chair,

We welcome the theme for this session of the Commission on the Status of Women ("the Commission"), "the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls".

This issue, along with gender equality and the empowerment of women in general, remain a high priority on the national agenda. This is confirmed through Trinidad and Tobago's ratification of and enactment into law of international legal instruments, including the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belem do Para), and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

Trinidad and Tobago has also introduced a broad spectrum of measures, including legislation to prevent gender based-violence, punish those who commit such crimes, and provide remedies for those affected. For example:

Reconciliation in matrimonial cases; to ensure that the wife has the same rights with respect to property as the husband; women have the right to make contracts in their name without the permission of their husbands; and, prompt and equitable legal remedies for victims of domestic violence.

Madam Chair,

Our laws also provide for the protection of women in co-habitational relationships for not less than 5 years (referred to as common-law unions), or who produce children in such relationships. In addition legislation exists to protect women against various sexual offences and prescribes increased penalties for such violations. Moreover, the law establishes compensation for victims of rape upon the conviction of the perpetrator.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through the Gender Affairs Division of the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, of which I have the honour to lead, has implemented a number of initiatives focused on the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls. Included among these are efforts to enhance the responsiveness of law enforcement agencies to reports of domestic violence which has resulted in the production of the Domestic Violence Investigative and Procedural Manual for Police Officers.

Madam Chair,

We recognize that issues related to gender-based violence are not confined to women, consequently programmes and projects have been formulated to bring about the social and economic changes to create an environment which supports the elimination of gender-based violence. To this end, the Defining Masculine Excellence Programme; the Gender on Your Agenda Television Panel Series and Radio Programme and Street Theatres are tools of public sensitization.

Another important initiative is the economic empowerment of women through skills training which aim to reduce their vulnerability to abuse through, for example, increased employability and earning potential.

Madam Chair,

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the important role of support systems in addressing the issue of violence against women and girls. Accordingly, it provides support services such as: free legal aid and advice; housing assistance; and free health care services which include the administering of HIV prophylaxis and emergency contraception in instances of sexual violence.

The Government also works closely with civil society and private sector organizations, as well as international agencies to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence and to provide a number of these support mechanisms for victims and survivors at no cost.

Madam Chair,

As members of the international community, we must all work together towards the common goal of preventing and eliminating violence against women to create a global society in which there is true equality between men and women. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago takes this opportunity to thank UN Women for supporting the project "Strengthening State Accountability and Community Action for Ending Gender-based Violence" which supports existing measures and is to be implemented soon.

The Honourable Kamla Persad Bissessar, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago is a staunch supporter of the role of women in alleviating issues related to gender-based violence and took the political initiative in 2010 to call on the General Assembly to adopt a resolution entitled: Women, Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Arms Control. Additionally, she has also advocated for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to be adopted by the UN to include provisions on gender-based violence.

Finally, I reiterate the unswerving commitment of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to work with all partners at the regional, hemispheric and global levels to combat the scourge gender-based violence.

I thank you.