



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

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PRESIDENT OF THE 78TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

VISION STATEMENT

“PEACE, PROSPERITY, PROGRESS AND SUSTAINABILITY”

INTRODUCTION

I am proud, and at the same time humbled, to accept the nomination of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as its candidate for the position of President of the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. It is my special privilege to have been favoured with the political endorsement of my regional group, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC). I deeply value the approbation of GRULAC and will work assiduously to honour it.

I now turn my attention to earning the trust, confidence and support of the wider membership in electing me as their President during the seventy-eighth session of the General Assembly. In doing so, I commit to discharging the responsibilities of the office of President with vigour 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 that is to bring us to our final destination. The uniqueness of multilateralism resides in the enhanced prospects and better advantages that it offers us for reaching the global consensus needed to address and often to resolve complex global challenges. Responding to those challenges is very much beyond the capacity of unilateral sovereign action.

Many have questioned the relevance and ability of multilateralism to deliver real results for effecting change in people's lives where they matter most, namely, on the ground. Yet we keep returning to multilateralism, despite the often experienced frustrations, because of the very nature of the process itself. As a members-driven process which accords equal respect and value to each of the 193 Member States, multilateralism in the United Nations is indeed unique. The mystique of that multilateralism is such that when there is a challenge to create workable solutions, the outcome reflects more than just the position of those 193 Member States. This is the type of multilateralism we urgently need now in order to ignite the imagination, to recognize and seize possibilities and turn them into opportunities and to think and act independently of the narrow and potentially paralysing strictures governed by national interest, as global citizens protecting our global commons from irretrievable harm, dislocation and dysfunction. We need to recognize that sometimes even informed self-interest demands cooperation and coordination with others in order to eliminate exceptional common threats that may be of such extraordinary consequence as to constitute a vital interest. Scientific evidence as well as our own experiential evidence has demonstrated the negative impacts of climate change, highlighting the existential threats not merely to our lives and livelihoods, but also to planetary ecosystems and therefore to the ability of human civilization to continue to exist on this planet. And in spite of it all, we have not been able over all these years to muster "the will", even in the face of billions of dollars worth of infrastructure loss and property damage, to take decisive, unified action, as a community battling a common and worsening threat, to save ourselves and our civilization.

Clearly, a posture of denial or procrastination is not credible, as climate action delayed will impose significant additional unanticipated costs on us all. We have fundamentally, no choice but to collaborate judiciously in confronting and transforming our current realities and to adopt formulas that offer us the best chances of overcoming the challenges at hand or, at the very least, mitigating their impact on our daily lives and livelihoods and the lives and livelihoods of whole communities, while time still permits. This is the test of our time. Will we muster the strength and courage to make bold, far-sighted transformational decisions, with effects that solidify the bases for peace, prosperity, progress and planetary sustainability? Or will we allow geopolitics to so infect our judgment as to cause us to fail to engage on behalf of the most basic of human and political instincts, namely, survival, and take decisive action to preserve the future of this planet as our natural habitat.

It is my view that the following are among the key elements of an effective Presidency : open and wide-ranging consultation, a keen ability to listen intently, transparency in decision-making, fairness, objectivity, independence, clear and effective communication with the membership and with third parties, maintenance of a posture of equidistance from all negotiating parties, adherence to the highest ethical standards and principles and a certain willingness to take risks, tempered by more than a small dose of realism. In conceptualizing the thrust of my Presidency, I have chosen “Peace, Prosperity, Progress and Sustainability” as my four watchwords, essentially because they constitute the four supreme objectives set before the international community at this juncture – objectives whose successful accomplishment would significantly halt the current trajectory of disappointment and disillusionment along which we seem to be proceeding and thus open up the possibilities of a world of boundless opportunity, in which nations and people live in harmony with each other and in harmony with nature.

PEACE

The myriad complexities faced by the international community with respect to peace and security have morphed into hybrid conflicts, which have exacerbated the challenges in an already fragile global environment. In some parts of the world, where geopolitical tensions have reached levels attesting to situations of an alarming precariousness, there exists a significant deficit of trust among stakeholders. In certain theatres, nuclear tensions are being stoked on a daily basis. Peace eludes us as much without as within, as internal conflicts boil over, often unleashing widespread suffering and hardship in the context of large-scale human displacement. To reverse this current trajectory, our responses must be grounded in a more robust multilateralism and most importantly, they must be more strongly people-centred.

As part of 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, small, powerful or otherwise, are heard. The abandonment or repudiation of collective security will render the world more unsafe and more insecure by triggering an arms race of an intensity never before witnessed, as individual countries seek to build up their defence capability to meet any potential threat. It is critically important, therefore, that we hold fast to the principles and values of the Charter of the United Nations and honour its pledge to succeeding generations.

The adoption by the General Assembly during its seventy-sixth session of resolution 76/262 , in which the Assembly decided that any permanent member of the Security Council who used the veto pre-emptively and arbitrarily to vote down a resolution calling for urgent humanitarian action or intervention by the Council should be required to explain its behaviour to the Assembly in the context of an emergency special session convened expressly for that purpose, is an important step forward in bringing a degree of transparency to the decision to invoke the veto. As a transparency mechanism, this is a welcome innovation.

However, ongoing problems with the functioning of the Security Council; the contamination of its role by geopolitical considerations, resulting in open questions about its capacity to carry out its mandate; and the ability of a sitting Chair to orchestrate the frustration of the will of the majority of the members of the Council all point to the necessity for substantive reform of the Council, within the framework of wider United Nations reform. This conversation is ongoing and while some preliminary steps have been taken to provide greater clarity on members’ views in the context of “informals”, we are still some distance away from entering the formal negotiating phase, which will surely be arduous. There is, however, widespread acceptance among the

membership of the

United Nations that the Council ought to be more representative in the context of the current realities of international politics and should be made fit for purpose.

We must recognize that a state of peace is not necessarily the same as the absence of war. Peace requires an all-out commitment, including by potential disputants. 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 vistas and possibilities, indeed, to soar to new heights. Peace is a universally coveted aspirational condition or standard that produces stability and inspires confidence – confidence as a fertilizer of economic growth and prosperity. Prosperity and Peace are therefore inextricably linked and so we need to continue to make investments in peace, as it is the bedrock of modern, stable, productive and thriving societies.

The corollary – that instability, conflict and war hold economic and social development hostage, denying people not merely the basic necessities of life but also the comforts of safety and security – is also true. Peace cannot thrive in the midst of social and economic deprivation and marginalization and will be forever under threat until inequality, discrimination, poverty, hunger and lack of access to proper health care have been meaningfully and sustainably addressed to the satisfaction of the downtrodden. Moreover, in the long term, peace cannot be guaranteed by force of arms alone. The General Assembly must therefore seek new initiatives through which to rekindle within us, both as human beings and as adherents and agents of peace, that unique spirit of conciliation and brotherhood that recommends and supports the choice of dialogue and negotiation over conflict and war. Indeed, it is in the very nature of war to ensure that even in victory, the victor loses massively.

In promoting and defending the Charter of the United Nations, it is therefore our duty as subscribers to its tenets to promote and advocate the settlement of disputes by peaceful means and therefore to repudiate force or the threat of the use of it as a legitimate means of resolving conflict. These are among the most fundamental principles of multilateralism and whenever and wherever they are cast aside or violated, the General Assembly must be vehement in its rejection of military confrontation and other forms of modern warfare, as they constitute real threats to the multilateral system itself and to international peace and security.

PROSPERITY

The pervasive impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change and global instability have placed an 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 are prolonged, poverty worsens and inequality widens across the globe.

We need action, now more than ever, to reach and to help those left furthest behind, especially in those countries in special situations. The full and effective implementation of the Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries, as well as the upcoming third International Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries and the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States, both to be held in 2024, will offer crucial opportunities to scale up investments towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in order to ensure that no country is left behind.

In that regard, the Sustainable Development Goals Summit during this year's high-level week will be a defining moment, as the Summit provides the ideal opportunity for Heads of State and Government to demonstrate real commitment towards the Sustainable Development Goals, including through contributing to

global development funding. Quite apart from targeting those countries in

vulnerable situations, we must also find tailored solutions in addressing the fragility and other specific challenges facing countries in conflict and post-conflict situations, as well as middle-income countries.

To ensure that no one is left behind, the international community must deliberately act in fulfilment of its commitments to the means of implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development itself. The proposed convening of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development should therefore garner the fullest attention of the General Assembly as we aim to strengthen actions towards enhancing financing, technology, debt sustainability and capacity-building to achieve sustainable development.

Globally, our efforts must be supported by a representative and enabling international economic and financial architecture which reflects and addresses the realities and needs of the United Nations membership today. The ambitious proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in his report entitled “Our Common Agenda”, including the reform of the international financial architecture, going beyond gross domestic product (GDP) and the development of the global digital compact, will require deeper deliberations and incisive decision-making by the General Assembly.

PROGRESS

Despite the placing of poverty and hunger at the core of the Sustainable Development Goals, some projections indicate that approximately 680 million people, that is, 8 per cent of global population, will still be facing hunger in 2030. The fact is that even before the pandemic, progress towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and targets was well behind expectations and delivery with respect to the undertaking to which we collectively pledged to commit ourselves in 2015 is becoming increasingly remote. Without a quantum leap in terms of commitment and transformational action, the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular eradicating poverty and ending hunger, will be dreadfully missed.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals announced therein constituted the first-ever fully negotiated comprehensive international development strategy formally agreed between the developed North and the global South and was hailed as ushering in a new era in development cooperation. Surely, given the extent to which both parties were able to agree successfully on the key elements of the diagnosis, or “problematique”, administration of the remedies agreed cannot be beyond us.

As the premier event to be held during high-level week, the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September of this year will be critical in setting the tone for what happens in other processes taking place within the ambit of the General Assembly. It is therefore crucial that all delegations recommit individually to re-energizing the Sustainable Development Goals process and make a robust push towards delivering them as a life-changing comprehensive package by 2030.

It is a counter-intuitive conclusion that in the twenty-first century, only half of humankind participates meaningfully in the economic and social life of society, with 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.

More generally, fundamental human rights have come under severe attack or have been denied to both individuals and groups, based on race, religion or ethnicity or through other forms of discrimination, creating all too often a marginalized, dehumanized underclass, disallowed by society from exercising their rights as human beings and thus engendering deep-seated resentment whose culmination often takes the form of social strife and intergroup rivalry. Our efforts should be focused on investing in our children – who are our future – and ensuring that they have access to quality learning opportunities and skills development programmes, proper nutrition, health care, safe water, protection and shelter.

Based on the fact that we are all created equal and vested at birth with an innate, indivisible set of human rights, the General Assembly must redouble its efforts and double down on its rhetorical thrust to halt the insidious spread of human rights violations. In a world where there is troubling evidence of growing institutionalized discrimination, we must use our platform in the Assembly to reject repugnant and scientifically baseless notions, while leading the conversation, at various levels, on the imperatives of establishing equality, equal rights and non-discrimination as legitimate social norms and, indeed, as the building blocks for strong, cohesive and just societies.

The President of the General Assembly Fellowship Programme, in continuing to recognize the key role that young people play in the realization of our aspirations towards the achievement of sustainable development, will contribute to our progress, as this programme offers a unique opportunity to promote engagement of youth and to seek their perspectives as contributions to the solutions necessary to tackle the challenges that they face as youths.

The progress that we will therefore advocate in the Office of the President of the General Assembly, which would be consonant with the scope of the goals enumerated in the 2030 Agenda, will lift the quality of life of people in vulnerable situations everywhere and present them with the opportunity to feel empowered to pursue their individual goals and aspirations to their fullest potential, unfettered by the arbitrary imposition of unjust limitations. We must continue to strongly advocate for the full and meaningful engagement of women in all spheres, which will inevitably heighten the prospects for sustainable peace, prosperity and progress and, indeed, sustainability. Certainly, the staffing of the Office of the President of the General Assembly will respect and honour that principle.

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

SUSTAINABILITY

Biology teaches us that a dynamic, productive human civilization such as the one we have inherited cannot survive with longevity, let alone thrive, on a polluted, overexploited planet whose natural ecosystems are damaged or teetering on the brink of collapse. When environmental limits are exceeded, there is the risk that the ensuing negative consequences may be irreversible, thereby undermining our ability to feed ourselves and to otherwise sustain future generations. Building a sustainable world, in harmony with nature, is the only means of ensuring the future viability of our planet and of our civilization. Climate change, desertification, pollution, biodiversity loss and land degradation are among the greatest challenges of our time and demand that we take collective, urgent actions to ensure the future of humanity and of the planet.

Last year's historic recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right reinforces the belief that the General Assembly has a key role to play in protecting our global commons by boosting global efforts towards **a c h i e v i n g** greater climate action, restoring ecosystems, protecting the oceans, combating

desertification and land degradation and promoting zero waste. Mindful that we are in an era of growing food insecurity, we must focus attention on the mechanics of enhancing soil and land productivity, if the planet is to support the population of 9.5 billion projected to live on it by 2050, for which another green revolution will be required. Inclusive and sustainable industrial development can play a crucial role in the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Transforming the nature of human behaviour on the planet from a mode of activity underpinned by a psychology of exploitation and mass consumption to one driven by sustainable use and sustainable management will require that humankind inevitably re-examine and recalibrate its own patterns of production and consumption of natural assets in order to ensure their responsible and sustainable use. Responsible management of those natural assets, including our global commons, means maintaining equilibria within the planet's ecosystems so that existing species can survive and indeed flourish, thereby guaranteeing their availability for enjoyment and use by future generations. This may require us to refrain from the overconsumption of a particular resource or perhaps other materials, the presence of which imperil or harm the very survival of the resource itself, a dynamic evidenced, for example, in humankind's widespread single use of plastics which endangers fisheries stocks in marine ecosystems and the overfishing of certain fish stocks which leads to their depletion.

We must harness the momentum and renew the hope inspired by the outcomes we achieved over the last year, including those adopted at the **2022 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development** (Second United Nations Ocean Conference), the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The upcoming Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the Climate Ambition Summit (to be convened by the Secretary-General), both to be held in September 2023, constitute excellent platforms for the demonstration by the international community of real commitment to creating “the future we want” by scaling up transformative actions to avert the environmental crises before us so that we can steer the world back onto the path of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Let us therefore, with vision and bold progressive action, strengthen the linkages between how we live and our environment by nurturing nature and investing in maintaining and restoring the ecological balance in our planetary systems and thereby promote their long-term sustainability. In so doing, we would be safeguarding and preserving many of the environmental assets that we enjoy today for the use and enjoyment of future generations. Such intergenerational stability would go a long way towards guaranteeing the sustainable development of future generations and a standard of well-being at least one that is no different from ours.

CONCLUSION

In the coming weeks, I will continue to engage regional and other groups as we collectively collaborate to establish an atmosphere of renewed cooperation and shared commitment in addressing the many challenges before the General Assembly. I will seek to enhance current approaches and adopt new ones together with feasible solutions which will benefit all, as we endeavour to deliver, or at least to strengthen the bases for delivering, peace, prosperity, progress and sustainability in the new world of the twenty-first century,

characterized by equality of opportunity for all.