



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
633 Third Avenue, 12th Floor • New York, N.Y. 10017 • Tel.: (212) 697-7620 • Fax: (212) 682-3580

**STATEMENT FOR THE
GENERAL DEBATE OF THE
2020 HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
UNDER THE THEME
“ACCELERATED ACTION AND TRANSFORMATIVE PATHWAYS:
REALIZING THE DECADE OF ACTION AND DELIVERY
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”**

17 July 2020

This year's High-level Political Forum comes at a time when the world is facing an unprecedented global emergency. The scale and scope of the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the profound fragilities of our interconnected world. If there was any doubt that our world faces common challenges, this pandemic has categorically put that to rest. It has brought to the forefront the urgent need for global collective action to save lives, restore livelihoods and weather the worst global recession since the Great Depression. **However, while we are in the same storm, many of us are not in the same boat.**

As small island developing states (SIDS), Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean face a multi-layered crisis comprising a public health emergency and pervasive socio-economic disruptions and uncertainty with far-reaching consequences for sustainable development in our countries. **Our hard-earned progress is in severe peril.**

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has implemented a suite of macroeconomic, health and social measures to minimise the contraction of the economy, maintain critical economic activity and ensure the health and well-being of our citizens, in particular the poor and vulnerable groups, including women and girls, persons with disabilities, and older persons. These measures have successfully limited the virus' contagion and mitigated the socio-economic pressures across all sectors in the short-term. However, accelerating action and delivery for sustainable development in a COVID-19 era and beyond will pose a significant challenge.

We have to, as a matter of survival, create new and more resilient economies and societies that stand a better chance at achieving a sustainable future for all. In this way, the sustainable development goals are even more crucial, and our response to the pandemic is intrinsically linked

with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **The Agenda remains the global blueprint to address these fragilities, build back better and ensure that no one is left behind.**

Therefore, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains fully committed to the values and principles of the 2030 Agenda. Driven by this commitment, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago continues to resolutely implement the principles and objectives of the 2030 Agenda, through its principal vehicle for localisation of the SDGs, the National Development Strategy (2016-2030), also referred to as **Vision 2030**. This Strategy is acutely aligned to the sustainable development goals, the SAMOA Pathway, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement.

Within this context, this year's preparation and presentation of Trinidad and Tobago's first voluntary national review on our progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda has distilled important key lessons from our 'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approach to create greater inclusivity, and synergy towards development, while taking into account the COVID-19 era and beyond.

In this regard, through the VNR process, Trinidad and Tobago identified the main areas where continued work on the SDGs is required. Efforts will be focused on the five accelerators identified in Trinidad and Tobago's Roadmap for SDG Implementation that can catalyse progress across multiple goals and targets. These accelerators are improved performance of social protection system; increased access to justice; greening infrastructure for sustainable development; strengthening competitiveness and productivity for inclusive growth; and integrated land and coastal management. Each of these accelerators is directly associated with one of the five focus

areas of Vision 2030, but they are conceived to affect the entire development agenda in an integrated and coherent manner.

Secondly, our data assessment and mapping exercise highlighted the need to improve data collection and data flow across key stakeholders within the national statistical system. By strengthening national statistical capacities, including those of the public sector and civil society, to collect SDG-related data. Deepening the collaboration within and across Government, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders will be critical in driving national and local implementation of the SDGs in communities.

Lastly, Trinidad and Tobago, like many SIDS, are confined by their limited fiscal space and high dependence on external markets, foreign direct investment and external borrowing. The dramatic and sudden economic shocks have exacerbated these inherent vulnerabilities and the necessary finance to achieve the SDGs as sources of income are constrained and redirected to address the pandemic. As the financial crisis deepens, scaling up international support, expanding access to concessionary financing, and creating an enabling environment for strengthening international development cooperation and partnerships with the United Nations, international financial institutions, multilateral banks, donors, and the private sector is of critical importance.

We are at a critical junction in our collective history. Our actions as an international community today will shape the world we live in for present and future generations. Our commitment to the 2030 Agenda must not waver before this immense challenge. **Rather, our resolve to ensure that no one is left behind must be strengthen.**

Therefore, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to congratulate the Governments of those Member States who, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic, have undertaken their national voluntary reviews, and commend them for their leadership and for sharing their experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago will not relent in its efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals. We remain fully committed, now more than ever, to accelerate and deepen our efforts to build a new society that is healthier, resilient, safe and more prosperous.