



# TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

by

**H. F. Mr. Rodney Charles**  
**Ambassador/Permanent Representative**  
**of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**  
**to the United Nations**

on

**Agenda Item 28 (a) and (b)**

**“Advancement of Women” and the**  
**“Follow-up to the Implementation of the**  
**Outcome of the Fourth World Conference**  
**on Women and of the twenty-third special**  
**session of the General Assembly.”**

**in the**  
**Third Committee**  
**of the**  
**Sixty-sixth session of the**  
**United Nations General Assembly”**

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**United Nations Headquarters**  
**New York**  
**Tuesday, October 11, 2011**



Mr. Chairman,

I wish to join previous speakers in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election to preside over the deliberations of this Committee for the current session. You can be assured that the individual and regional will work with you and other delegations in order to bring a successful conclusion to all of our deliberations.

We also wish to align ourselves with the statements endorsed by the Caribbean Community on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Guyana on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to ensuring that our society is a more gender sensitive environment with a greater awareness of assuring women and girls. Consequently, gender equality and the empowerment of women continue to be a priority on the national agenda.

Trinidad and Tobago also remains committed to implementing fully the provisions of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and all its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other international instruments to which Trinidad and Tobago is a State Party. Our obligations under these mechanisms are implemented domestically through different pieces of legislation geared towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. In this regard, our civil, criminal and administrative laws include provisions for the prevention, punishment and eradication of violence against women and other obstacles which inhibit the advancement of women and girls. We have also enacted laws to protect the rights of women relating to maternity, domestic violence, legal aid and advice, matrimonial relationships and occupational safety and health. The underlying objectives of these legislative actions is the protection and empowerment of women in our society.

In recognition of the cross-cutting nature of gender issues and the need to integrate gender issues into national policy, as well as the important contribution of women to national development, the Government continues to address these issues through the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development. Spearheading this initiative is the recently established Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development.

Mr. Chairman,

Trinidad and Tobago has made tremendous progress in its efforts aimed at ensuring that women and girls take their rightful place in the national development. These include access to free education from the pre-school to the tertiary level. Our thrust in education has been successful to an extent that the number of female graduates at both secondary and tertiary levels continues to exceed the number of males. In addition, the

Government has also been successful in the technical and vocational fields for vulnerable groups in society, including higher income, the transfer of unemployment benefits, for traditional skills, multi-sector skills and youth apprenticeship programmes. Law success in the sphere of education has been significant in the words of his former Secretary General, Kofi Annan who asserted that, "there is no more effective way for development more effective than the education of girls".

Women and girls are also able to benefit from many health services which are free to the public. These include a network of hospitals and health care centres. These facilities are complemented with the provision of pharmaceutical and health grants, as well as the Chronic Disease Assistance Scheme (CDAS), which provides prescription drugs and other pharmaceuticals to help reduce the burden of certain health conditions, in particular, non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

In addition, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is aware of the increasing burdens being placed on working women which sometimes affect their ability to adequately nurture their children. Consequently, proposals have been submitted to pass laws and regulations which are more conducive to providing longer flexible working hours for women, as well as facilities such as daycare centres and where lactating mothers can nurse their infants. Consideration is also being given to extending the time granted to mothers as maternity leave.

Mr. Chairman,

True democratic development and lasting peace can only be achieved if women are provided with equal opportunities to participate in decision-making at all levels in order to contribute to the transformation of their societies. In an attempt to promote this objective, Trinidad and Tobago has supported the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was adopted by consensus at the 4th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Trinidad and Tobago, as the first woman Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth, has advanced the Commonwealth Theme for 2011 - "Women as Agents of Change". Her commitment to advancing this agenda resulted in the convening of a Caribbean Regional Colloquium "Women leaders as agents of change" in Port of Spain, Trinidad, in 2011, which brought together women politicians from North America, Latin America and the Caribbean. This event, co-sponsored by Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Caribbean Women's League (CWL), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Commonwealth, culminated in the adoption of the Port of Spain Consensus on *Women's Leadership in Gender Equality*.

On the global plane, Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar also co-hosted a high-level side event on Women's Political Participation at United Nations Headquarters on September 19, 2011, during which the Hon. SRIJAY WOODWARD, UNDP, had a number of other women world leaders.

At this event, the Honorable Prime Minister announced the appointment in Trinidad and Tobago of special envoys on women and girls and her intention to introduce a gender responsive budget, as well as enhance gender-responsive national development planning. Further, the Prime Minister announced her intention to establish a National Commission on Gender Equality, which would include women from all sectors of society. She also announced her intention to continue her efforts to advance women's rights in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago moreover is undertaking a process of transforming our governance system through schemes which would increase women's participation at all levels of the electoral and political processes. Coupled to this are initiatives aimed at increasing the involvement of women in other areas of public life, as well as in the private sector. The Government intends to support these efforts by providing gender awareness training to recruiting boards, including political parties, to ensure that women participate equally, and to implement mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress made in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

While we have made tremendous strides in promoting the well-being of women and girls, we are aware that national development must be balanced. It is therefore imperative to ensure that boys and men are also included and involved in processes aimed at achieving gender equality. Consequently, the mass media and other communications media play an important role as a creative means through which gender equality, as well as mutual understanding and respect between both sexes, are promoted.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I wish to quote the words of a woman leader who urged us to be the change that we wish to see. In this regard, the United Nations has called on all Member States to heed the words of this champion of human rights and to implement measures to remove all forms of discrimination which prevent women and girls from enjoying their inalienable human rights.

Trinidad and Tobago will continue to work at the national level to ensure that wherever women and girls are treated as equal partners in the development of our country, we also remain fully committed to working with our partners at the regional and global levels to achieve an international order where women and girls are equally provided with opportunities to achieve their fullest potential and to make genuine and equal contributions to the development of their societies.

I thank you.

At this event, the Honorable Prime Minister announced the appointment in Trinidad and Tobago of special envoys on women and girls and her intention to introduce a gender-responsive budget, as well as enhance gender-responsive national development planning. Further, the Prime Minister announced her intention to establish a National Commission on Gender Equity which would include women from all sectors of society to advise and support the Government in its efforts to advance women's rights in Trinidad and Tobago.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago, moreover, is undertaking to transform our government system through schemes which would increase women's participation at all levels of the electoral and political processes. Coupled to this are initiatives aimed at increasing the involvement of women in other areas of public life, as well as in the private sector. The Government intends to support these efforts by providing gender awareness training for recruiting bodies, including political parties, to ensure that women participate equally, and to implement mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress made in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

While we have made tremendous strides in promoting the well-being of women and girls, we are aware that national development must be balanced. It is therefore imperative to ensure that boys and men are educated and employed, and that the well-being of all citizens is protected. Consequently, the mass media and other agencies in Trinidad and Tobago play an important role as a creative means through which gender equality, understanding and respect between both sexes, are promoted.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I wish to echo the words of Mahatma Gandhi who urged us to "be the change that we wish to see". In this regard, we call on all Member States to heed the words of the champion of human rights and to implement measures to remove all forms of discrimination which prevent women and girls from enjoying their inalienable human rights.

Trinidad and Tobago will continue to work at the national level to create a society where women and girls are treated as equal partners in the development of our country. We also remain fully committed to working with our partners at the regional and global levels to achieve an international order where women and girls are equally provided with opportunities to achieve their fullest potential and to make genuine and valuable contributions to the development of their societies.

I thank you