



# Sustainable development and greater integration

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Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

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I bring warm greetings to the Association of Caribbean States (ACS/AEC) from the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity and honoured to share with you, in this the Special 10th Edition of the ACS Yearbook, the philosophy and policies of my Government.

As you may know, in May of this year, the people of Trinidad and Tobago elected a new political administration to chart the course of its development over the next five years. I now have the profound privilege of leading this administration as the first female Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

## Interconnected pillars for sustainable development

My Government has adopted a new policy for sustainable development that centres on the following seven pillars:

- 1. People-centred development** in which the focus is on lifelong learning, skills building, institutional strengthening and the building of a competitive economy.
- 2. Poverty eradication and social justice** which deals with closing the divide between the rich and the poor and eradicating what is often termed as abject poverty.
- 3. National and personal security** in which the focus will be on human security and the establishment of a regime of peace, security and prosperity on a sustainable basis for Trinidad and Tobago.
- 4. Information and communication technologies (ICT)**, since this is fundamental to the development of every modern, progressive society.
- 5. A more diversified, knowledge-intensive economy** which is needed in a world in which innovation is the decisive competitive advantage. Human initiative and creative capacity represent an enormous asset.
- 6. Good governance** that will enhance democratic processes by strengthening existing institutions and by establishing new institutions or appropriate infrastructure to support accountability, transparency,

consultation, participation and consensus-building and more meaningful representation. Emphasis will also be placed on restructuring existing government delivery systems to make our government more responsive to the needs of the people.

**7. Foreign policy.** We are one of 84 countries in the world with a population size below three (3) million and it is imperative that we structure our foreign policy to support and advance our objectives, which are inclusive of sustainable national development, progress, peace and security. We see the international arena and the world system as a space of opportunity to build partnerships, to leverage resources and to influence the direction of decision-making regionally and globally.

We regard these pillars as the cornerstone of our strategy for sustainable development. Further, it is our intention to embrace the richness and beauty of our people's great diversity, to nurture a more humane and cohesive society. Our focus rests squarely on the welfare of the people of our dynamic twin-island Republic.

## Towards greater integration

Uniting more than 200 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean, the ACS has provided an avenue for its people to co-operate in a range of areas – economic, technical and cultural – while preparing for broader free trade arrangements. Commonality of history and heritage, a shared strategic location and the potential for meaningful co-operation in the areas of tourism, trade, transport and disaster risk reduction all remain as relevant for Member States today, as they did at the inception of the ACS almost two decades ago in 1994.

As an active member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), I wish to assure you that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains dedicated to initiatives that would result in further development of the Greater Caribbean Region. In this regard, therefore, we are supportive of the full engagement and strengthening of the regional integration process.



I would like to recognise the achievements of the Association of Caribbean States for its work towards the realisation of its objectives of: strengthening regional cooperation and integration; preserving the environmental integrity of our common patrimony – the Caribbean Sea; and promoting the sustainable development of the Greater Caribbean.

Trinidad and Tobago not only values its role within the Caribbean and Americas Region but also its active involvement in the multilateral fora. As the current Chair of the Commonwealth Group of Nations, which is an Association of 53 states, comprising approximately two billion citizens which accounts for almost 30 per cent of the world's population, Trinidad and Tobago has been seeking to highlight the pressing issues bedevilling the most vulnerable Member States.

The membership of the Commonwealth reflects the broad political, economic, cultural, religious and ethnic diversities and includes developing and developed nations, underdeveloped countries, and demographically and geographically large and small states. So we will continue to strive to address global matters such as economic cooperation, trade, foreign direct investment, promotion of renewable sources of energy, climate change, poverty, achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and crime, drug and human trafficking; all in the context of a

common commitment to achieving democracy and human rights.

#### **The way forward**

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the ACS and to its mandates. We also take great pride in our role as Host Country for the ACS Secretariat and trust that we have created an environment which fosters dialogue and co-operation.

Trinidad and Tobago has been an active participant, with our Caribbean and hemispheric partners within CARICOM, in working together to achieve sustainable development amidst the ever growing concern of the effects of climate change, that are dramatically impacting our Small Island Developing States more and more every day. We remain committed to initiatives which mitigate against the negative impact of climate change.

We will continue to stand in solidarity with our neighbours most in need, such as Haiti, still gallantly recovering after the devastating earthquake of 12th January 2010. With our ACS partners, we will continue to work towards the transformation of our hemisphere to create broader markets, promote trade and work further towards the attainment of human and socio-economic prosperity. ■

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Kamla Persad-Bissessar addresses the United Nations General Assembly in New York, 27th September, 2010