



PUNCHING ABOVE OUR WEIGHT IN THE WORLD

FOREWORD BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT

By the end of the Second World War, colonial peoples considered themselves sufficiently equipped to become their own masters and, in some parts of the world, the struggle for independence was a bloody one. The Mau Mau interventions come to mind immediately.

Trinidad and Tobago's story is quite different and we were able to set aside strong political rivalries and chart a peaceful course for independence which was granted in 1962. By that time, we were ready to take up the reins of leadership and, having a cadre of well-educated persons supported by a population which shared the vision of independence, we set our course.

Our independence followed by our Republican Constitution in 1976, set out the basic charter by which we are guided and the institutions, many of which were inherited from the previous era, continue to provide the framework which informs decision making processes, throughout our systems of governance, with adjustments appropriate to our circumstances being made, from time to time. These institutions provide a significant measure of stability which assists in guiding us to fulfil our obligations to our people in so far as their aspirations and expectations, according to guarantees in our Constitution, are concerned. Monitoring safeguards is an important element which a vigilant population must see to.

Because of the practical involvement of our local population in the various aspects of the country's life, be it the public service, industry

including energy, agriculture, particularly primary products such as sugar and cocoa, we have been able to move forward from the umbrella of concessionary arrangements and secure markets for our products. Moreover, we have so structured our fiscal arrangements as to provide a climate for investment that can withstand the competition that arises from the clamour of other developing countries for space in the global environment.

This was a natural progression which had and continues to have, at its root, the emphasis placed on education. Long before we had a system that provides free education from nursery to tertiary levels – one of the few in the world, if not the only one – education has been central to our wellbeing. Scholarly achievement dates far back into our short history and today, Trinidad and Tobago is known, worldwide, for its contributions to international law, medicine, diplomacy and culture, inter alia.

The people of Trinidad and Tobago have endured slavery and indentureship, placing them firmly behind as a lesson in history that must be well learned, with the determination that they must never occur here again. The histories of our two islands diverge, significantly, in terms of our colonial past and, in that context, Tobago's history of bi-cameralism predates that of Trinidad. Culturally, there are differences based on the colonisation of the islands, but we continue to work towards maximum complementarity for the benefit of the entire country. ►



50 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

**H.E. PROFESSOR
GEORGE MAXWELL
RICHARDS**

President of the Republic of
Trinidad and Tobago



50 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

It is said of us that, per capita, Trinidad and Tobago has more creative talent than any other country in the world

◀ It is not farfetched to surmise that we derive our confidence from the fact that, while we are generally respectful of others, we are not awed by anyone or by any culture, for that matter, because we have been a melting pot, as it were, of so many peoples. Our indigenous people, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas, have all contributed to our population of some 1.3 million persons. Diversity, in many forms, is at home here. And so we quickly understand others, though I cannot say that the reverse is true, and consequently, the welcome embrace which we extend to others is easily recognised.

In culture, we are surpassing. It is said of us that, per capita, Trinidad and Tobago has more creative talent than any other country in the world. I am certainly not about to dispute that, as I continue to be amazed at the creativity of our cultural practitioners of every genre, at home and abroad.

Our sportsmen and sportswomen are on the rise. A few weeks ago we would have been proud to speak of one gold medal spectacularly won, in Montreal, in 1976, by Hasely Crawford. But 2012 and London have brought new rewards including our second gold from 19 year-old Keshorn Walcott and three bronze medals in team relays. We have not won a world cup in football, but we have made history as the smallest nation to reach the finals where, in Germany, our sportsmanship was highly acclaimed, under the captaincy of Dwight Yorke from Tobago, whose scoring record at Manchester

United made that club the shining star of British and European Soccer, for many years. But then there is cricket and our own Brian Lara holds several records including that of 501 not out – the highest individual score in first class cricket. He is the only batsman to have ever scored a hundred, a double century, a triple century, a quadruple century and a quintuple century in first class games in the course of a senior career.

All of this is played out, first of all here, in our lovely, twin island State of Trinidad and Tobago and we have taken our offerings abroad, sharing with the world what we have crafted and enjoy at home, uniquely the steel pan music. God has truly blessed us with natural resources and human resources that defy our size. We take no credit for the geography, the flora and fauna, with so much that is peculiar to Trinidad and Tobago. But our people must be applauded for who we have become, over time, and for the countless ways in which they have assigned themselves the role of ambassadors for Trinidad and Tobago, unpaid, spreading the message of the goodness of Trinidad and Tobago. They do so with an ease and a bravado that is peculiar to the Trinidad and Tobago person.

We have offered much, over the last 50 years, we yet have much to offer, and we welcome to our shores all those who wish to experience a different taste of the good life and to help us to realise our full potential. I am proud to claim Trinidad and Tobago as my country.

May God bless our Nation! ■

George Maxwell Richards