



# TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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

**FOR THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE**

**2022 HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**UNDER THE THEME**

***“BUILDING BACK BETTER FROM THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)***

***WHILE ADVANCING THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR***

***SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”***

18 July 2022

The world is confronted with an unprecedented multilayered crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and global instability have placed extraordinary strain on our economies and societies, and created alarming consequences for achieving sustainable development for our peoples.

As these crises persist, the ongoing exogenous shocks will further jeopardize the hard-earned, yet fragile, development gains made by the most vulnerable, including small island developing states, like Trinidad and Tobago.

The current situation demands that the international community show real solidarity and collectively take urgent action to save both lives and livelihoods, as Governments strive to find the right balance of measures to restore broad-based job-creating growth and increase global food supplies, while minimizing the burden of rampant global inflation on their populations.

In this way, the SDGs become even more crucial, having regard to the fact that our responses to these multiple crises are intrinsically linked to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. **The Agenda remains the global blueprint to address our fragilities, build back better and ensure that no one is left behind.**

As part of its objective to build back better from the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago established the Roadmap to Recovery (R2R) and Community Recovery Committees to provide the necessary strategic focus to three immediate priorities, namely, addressing and mitigating hardship inflicted by COVID-19; increasing economic growth; and laying the foundation for sustained economic recovery. The focus on these priorities is also meant to ensure that Trinidad and Tobago's progress towards achieving the stated objectives of its National Development Strategy, Vision 2030, and the SDGs was not irreparably derailed.

The recommendations of the two Committees are intended to guide Trinidad and Tobago's actions in setting a solid foundation for the transformation of the economy and society. These interventions have already been incorporated into our fiscal planning, thereby committing the resources required to allow Trinidad and Tobago to improve the prospects for recovery from the extraordinary challenges brought about by the pandemic.

In addition, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has placed emphasis on cultivating domestic capabilities through the creation of an enabling environment to attract private sector investment. Likewise, the adoption of innovative, technology-driven solutions in the areas of climate change, non-communicable diseases, and renewable energy will continue to be strengthened. These approaches are anchored in the country's National Innovation Policy with its focus on designing strategies for driving innovation.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has accelerated its digital transformation strategy through the transfer of several public services to online environments. All Government agencies now have an online presence and several agencies have initiated or are pursuing the integration of online services. Trinidad and Tobago's education system now incorporates virtual learning from preschool to university and efforts are ongoing, with support from the UN and other development partners, to ensure that no student, especially those from rural and low-income communities, are adversely impacted through lack of access to devices or internet connectivity.

Trinidad and Tobago also recognises that the application of climate and environment-responsive approaches to COVID-19 recovery efforts can build resilience, strengthen disaster risk reduction, and tackle climate change and biodiversity loss. As such, Trinidad and Tobago remains cognizant that sustainable development would be unattainable without fulfilling its commitments to protect the environment including, among others, our national target of a 15% reduction of our carbon emissions by 2030 from business as usual. Despite our low carbon footprint by global standards, we are fully committed to meeting that target and encourage others to act in good faith to meet the 1.5 degrees Celsius temperature goal. The situation confronting us is a call to urgent action by the international community to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement, as well as the Glasgow Climate Pact, through credible, concrete, enhanced commitments that, in aggregate, will have a transformational impact in stabilising the global climate.

Prior to the pandemic, SDG financing had already fallen alarmingly short, and as the current global socio-economic shocks persist, we can only expect this gap to widen. It is our hope, therefore, that the spirit of global cooperation and coordinated action that has characterised the past two years, though not perfect, is not lost over time. International cooperation at all levels must be deepened and strengthened, and greater efforts at scaling up development financing and investment flows to developing countries would make a quantum difference in bringing us closer to achieving the SDGs and its related targets.

Yet, Trinidad and Tobago, like many SIDS, is constrained by their limited fiscal space and high dependence on external markets, foreign direct investment and external borrowing. While the dramatic and sudden economic shocks have exacerbated these inherent vulnerabilities, significantly reducing the resources available to finance the SDGs, the Government has had no choice but to divert those limited resources to protect public health and livelihoods during the pandemic. As the financial crisis deepens, the outlook for achieving sustainable development globally is likely to be one of frustration and disappointment due to missed opportunities; unless a new approach is adopted that includes the scaling up of international support, the expansion of access to concessionary financing, and the creation of an enabling environment for international development cooperation and partnerships with the United Nations, international financial institutions, multilateral banks, regional development banks, donors, and the private sector.

Trinidad and Tobago, therefore, underscores the call made by the international community for tailored measures and solutions to address the fundamental financing challenges facing SIDS, including the critical need for adoption of a multidimensional vulnerability index (MVI).

**The international community as a whole must do all it can to ensure that no one is left behind by leaving behind the anachronistic and flawed measures of development.**

In closing, we are at a critical juncture in our collective history. Our actions as an international community today will shape the world we live in and the planet we inhabit for present and future generations. Our commitment to the 2030 Agenda must not waver before these immense challenges. **Rather, our resolve to ensure that no one is left behind must now be converted from rhetoric to bold action.**

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