



**GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

**INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

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**PRIME MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**CARIBBEAN ENERGY SECURITY INITIATIVE**

**WASHINGTON DC, USA**

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It is my pleasure to participate in the continuing dialogue between Caribbean Countries and the United States of America on the Caribbean Energy Security Initiative and to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our host for the interest and support in the pursuit of this worthwhile initiative. I also wish to extend sincere greetings to my Caribbean colleagues and look forward to having productive dialogue in addressing the issue of energy security for the region.

The issue of energy security has been on our agendas for an interminable period of time without any constructive approach for defining a way forward. The current volatility in global energy markets underscores our vulnerability to wide fluctuations in energy prices and the need for a programmed approach to energy security.

In its January 2016 Report on Global Economic Prospects, the World Bank projected global growth rates to reach 2.9 percent in 2016, compared to 2.5 percent in 2015, as a modest recovery in advanced economies continues and activity levels stabilize among major commodity exporters. However, the Bank cautioned that a more protracted slowdown across large emerging markets could have substantial spillover effects on other developing economies, such as those in the Caribbean. Economic activity in the Latin America and Caribbean region which contracted by 0.9 percent in 2015 is projected to be flat in 2016.

The Caribbean countries, with a few exceptions such as Trinidad and Tobago are net importers of energy, and these imports consume significant proportions of their national budgets. As a consequence, a stable energy market and access to reliable and affordable supplies of energy are important for facilitating economic development.

The current scenario of lower energy prices has been beneficial to regions which are net importers of energy, such as the Caribbean but severely inimical to energy exporting countries. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, the economy has been adversely affected since the oil and gas sector is the mainstay of the economy and, notwithstanding our diversification thrust, will remain so for the foreseeable future.

Despite our energy endowments, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has taken a policy decision to maximize, where practicable, the use of renewable energy, such as solar and wind. We plan to do this through the use of incentives, concessions and enabling legislation and we also plan to make the reduction of our carbon footprint a priority. At the December 2015 Climate Change Conference, Trinidad and Tobago committed to a reduction in overall emissions from the power generation, transportation and industrial sectors by 15% by 2030. In absolute terms, this is the equivalent of one hundred and three million tonnes (103,000,000) of carbon dioxide emissions. The estimated cost of meeting this policy objective is US\$ 2 billion, and as such, international financing will be required if we are to meet our commitment.

From a regional perspective, there has been an unwavering commitment to a reduction in the use of fossil fuels. In this regard, regional targets regarding the contribution of renewable energy sources to overall electricity generation at the National and Community levels in CARICOM were approved by CARICOM Ministers with responsibility for Energy at the Forty-First Special Meeting of the COTED (Energy). Initial targets were set at 20%, 28% and 47% for the years 2017, 2022 and 2027, respectively. These are ambitious targets. Their implementation will require the mobilization of human and financial capital and

the building of institutional, technical and human capacity to support renewable energy deployment.

For the region to be economically and environmentally sustainable, a major reconfiguration of its energy systems and regulatory frameworks will be required. This will necessitate the determination of the most cost effective energy mix between fossil fuels and renewable energy, and will be contingent on significant investment inflows if the transformation is to be realized.

To this end, CARICOM has developed a Caribbean Sustainable Energy Roadmap and Strategy (C-SERMS) which is the regional energy planning, management and implementation framework for expediting the application of renewable energy and energy efficient solutions within the Community. I strongly encourage the stakeholders, regionally and internationally, to utilize C-SERMS in our efforts to achieve greater energy reliability and sustainability.

In 2013 an MOU was signed between the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and the US Department of Energy, with the aim of facilitating co-operation on energy efficiency, clean technologies and in the establishment of a Regional Renewable Research Centre. This initiative was allowed to lapse and needs to be resuscitated.

In terms of energy co-operation, Trinidad and Tobago has had a history of assisting the Members of CARICOM in the development of their energy sectors. Trinidad and Tobago has also utilized returns from its energy sector to provide some measure of relief to Members of the Community experiencing economic problem due to substantial increases in petroleum products.

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Currently, we have entered into bilateral relations with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the Co-operative Republic of Guyana and the Republic of Haiti for co-operation in the field of energy. Our agreement with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela includes co-operation between our countries in the monetization of cross-border hydrocarbon fields and any other designated hydrocarbon fields to our mutual benefit. Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana have agreed to cooperate in the areas of training, education and research; sharing of information, expertise and the use of best practice and cooperation in projects in renewable energy and in the oil and gas sector. Similarly, the focus in Haiti has been on the execution of projects and /or activities that will foster the development of the energy sector of both countries.

It is through such intra-regional co-operation, aided by the requisite investment inflows that countries can develop their resources to achieve energy security. In this regard, access to affordable financial resources is a prerequisite for Caribbean Countries if the attainment of energy security is to be a realizable goal. Investors are therefore urged to collaborate on identifying and realizing the many prospects that exist in this diverse region.

This forum has been useful for the exchange of ideas and provides an opportunity to move beyond concepts and to agree on concrete measures to move countries closer to this objective of energy security. This will require an unequivocal commitment and focus on a defined way forward to the attainment of that goal. I am confident that there is the will to do so, and that decisions made at this meeting will embrace the sentiments of the parties and give us that way forward.

I thank you.