STATEMENT

By

H.E. Ambassador Rodney Charles
Permanent Representative,
of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
to the United Nations

on Agenda Item 19:
Sustainable Development

in the
Second Committee

of the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly

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United Nations Headquarters
November 5th, 2013
Mr. Chairman,

Trinidad and Tobago associates itself with the statements made by the distinguished representatives of Fiji on behalf of the G77 and China; Nauru on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island Developing States and Barbados on behalf of the Caribbean Community. We also extend our appreciation to the Secretary General for the reports issued under this agenda item and take this opportunity to deliver remarks on sub items (a) (b) and (d).

Mr. Chairman,

Trinidad and Tobago continues to play its part as a responsible member of the international community in addressing the challenge of climate change notwithstanding our small size, acute sustainable development challenges and miniscule contribution to this global problem.

In addition to implementing a national climate change policy, we have mobilized a significant amount of resources at the national level for investment in new and innovative technologies with lower levels of emissions, including the expenditure of 100 million USD for the conversion of 17,000 vehicles to Compressed Natural Gas. We have also taken concrete steps toward the gradual removal of fossil fuel subsidies on motor vehicle fuels and have removed the fossil fuel subsidy for the national airline. Other concrete measures under development include, the replacement of public lighting and street lighting with solar light emitting diode bulbs and increasing efficiency in Government buildings through the development of a Green Government policy and the incorporation of green building concepts in a revised National Building Code.

Additionally, pursuant to our national climate change strategy we are putting institutional structures in place to mainstream climate change into national development planning and working on the development of a carbon reduction strategy focused on the energy sector.

Mr. Chairman,

As a small island developing state, highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and witnessing its increasing negative impact on the lives of our people, Trinidad and Tobago is of the firm view that action to address this issue must be urgent, global, ambitious and mindful of the plight of the most vulnerable. We are doing our part. We call on all countries to put aside the rhetoric and the posturing and engage in good faith in the climate change negotiations to agree on action that would be commensurate with the scale of the problem we face. In this regard, we fully align ourselves with the priorities identified by the Permanent Representative of Barbados on behalf of CARICOM for the upcoming COP 19 Warsaw Climate Change Conference.

As we move closer to the 2015 deadline for a new climate change agreement, applicable to all under the UNFCCC, we welcome the initiative of the Secretary General to convene world leaders at next year's Climate Change Summit. While the Summit is not a negotiating forum meant to replace the UNFCCC, we see it as an opportunity for world
leaders to demonstrate a clear commitment to addressing the issue of climate change through intensifying mitigation action up to 2020 and providing clear indications of the actions they will be prepared to take in the post 2020 period. This must be done with a full appreciation of the broader context with the launch of intergovernmental discussions on the Post 2015 development agenda and will require careful management of the linkages and synergies between the two issues.

Mr. Chairman,

We are indeed at a pivotal phase in the work of crafting the global development agenda for the future. We have the opportunity to fast-track implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and, based on the firm foundation that they provide, catalyse the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development through the launch of the global sustainable development goals. At the same time, we must manage the risks that accompany these opportunities. We must ensure that development gains are sustained and not reversed, and that, notwithstanding the present weak global financial and economic situation, small vulnerable countries are not left to grapple with development challenges in an inflexible and non-facilitative international environment.

It is in this context that we join our call with others for support for the 2014 International Year of Small Island Developing States as well as the Third International Conference on SIDS to be convened next year in Samoa. We expect this Conference to, among other things, outline SIDS priority issues for action on sustainable development, highlight key areas for partnership with the international community and facilitate the integration of the SIDS sustainable development agenda as a pillar of the post 2015 development agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

Trinidad and Tobago looks forward to the convening of the fifth session of the Open Working Group on the Sustainable Development Goals (‘the OWG’). As a member of the OWG we will engage actively in the discussions on the selected themes for the session: sustained and inclusive economic growth, macroeconomic policy questions, infrastructure development and industrialization and energy. At the same time, we note that, in addition to addressing the thematic areas there are a number of issues of systemic concern which should also remain in sight. These include, options for structuring the proposed goals and the need to build a common understanding of the issues of universality and differentiation. We are of the view that opportunities must be provided for these issues to be discussed in an open inclusive manner by all stakeholders. We look forward to any proposals of the co-chairs to facilitate such discussion and assure them of the support of Trinidad and Tobago in moving forward.

I thank you.