Please Check Against Delivery

STATEMENT

by

Ms. Melissa Boissiere
Second Secretary

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
to the United Nations

on Agenda Item 28 on Advancement of Women
in the Third Committee of the
68th session of the United Nations General Assembly


*****

United Nations Headquarters

October 16, 2013
Mr. Chairman,

Trinidad and Tobago aligns itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of Fiji on behalf of the G77 and China, Cuba on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and Guyana on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). We also reiterate our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the informative reports distributed under this agenda item.

Trinidad and Tobago remains fully committed to promoting and protecting the rights of women and continues to undertake a number of initiatives towards this end which are led by the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development. These include cooperation with non-governmental organizations as well as other partners at the national, regional and international levels. Our ratification of the relevant international instruments which seek to ensure the promotion and protection of women’s rights are also an indication of the priority accorded to this issue in the context of our national agenda.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to fulfill our international obligations which have been taken into account in our national legislation, policies and programmes, the Government continues to implement a number of concrete measures. These relate to cooperation with State agencies, academia and civil society to mainstream gender perspectives into policies, programmes and projects; creating a more gender-sensitive society through, among others, programmes involving men and boys which, inter alia, raise awareness of women’s rights and gender issues in general, and fostering the sharing of responsibilities in relation to work and family life, including responsibilities in the home; the drafting of a national Gender Policy which is under consideration; and providing universal access to education for all citizens from nursery to tertiary levels, as well as training opportunities for women, as needed, to empower them and to improve their marketable skills.

Our legislative framework has also been amended on various occasions to better protect the rights of women which include protecting them from all forms of discrimination and violence. The Occupational Health and Safety Act of 2000, for instance, requires employers to provide facilities that accommodate the needs of women, including to protect unborn children. The Government also intends to enact legislation to make it mandatory for all public and private offices to provide appropriate spaces for nursing mothers.

Other programmes relate to the promotion of women’s participation in all areas of public life, such as in politics, as well as in decision-making at all levels in both the public and private sectors; promoting and facilitating women’s economic empowerment and their abilities to contribute to building the economy; and addressing the impact of gang activity and armed violence and the manner in which they affect the lives of women in Trinidad and Tobago.

With regard to the last point, Mr. Chairman, the issue of violence and crime related to the use of small arms and light weapons is one which presents fundamental challenges at the national
level, and one which the Government continues to work assiduously to address. Accordingly, Trinidad and Tobago has been an avid supporter of adopting an international convention to regulate the trade in small arms and light weapons. For these reasons, our delegation participated actively in negotiations on the Arms Trade Treaty ("the Treaty") which was adopted earlier this year. We are also one of the few countries to have already ratified the Treaty. Furthermore, our delegation will continue to contribute to the expansion of the discourse on the important role of women in the promotion and maintenance of peace and security. In this regard, we will once again present in the First Committee during this session a draft resolution on "Women, Disarmament, Non-proliferation and Arms Control". Mr. Chairman, due to Trinidad and Tobago's strong commitment to and active involvement in addressing crime and security issues, including the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, our Government takes this opportunity to request the support of Member States for the establishment of the Secretariat of the Arms Trade Treaty in Trinidad and Tobago.

Due to our recognition of the critical importance of the family unit, Mr. Chairman, our Constitution recognizes and guarantees the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of all citizens, including respect for family life. The family is essential in shaping individuals, particularly in contributing to the education and development of children as well as influencing their values and perceptions. As a result, the Government has implemented several programmes to address issues which affect the family, including women in the family, some of whom are single mothers and heads of households. These are aimed at eliminating gender stereotypes and violence against women; strengthening and preserving the family unit; assisting families to overcome challenges which would then allow their members to achieve their fullest potential; and fostering the growth and development of balanced and productive individuals, including women, who contribute positively to society.

Health is another critical area in which work is ongoing to ensure the full enjoyment of the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including by women. To achieve this objective, the Government operates a network of hospitals and health centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago at no cost to citizens. These services are supported by various grants including the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP).

Mr. Chairman,

Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) have a significant impact on our productivity, our financial and human resources and our development in general. We therefore look forward to working together with the international community to continue to implement the provisions of the Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of NCDs adopted at the high-level meeting on the subject held at the United Nations in 2011, and the inclusion of measures to address NCDs in the context of the post 2015 development agenda. We also anticipate the timely adoption by the General Assembly of an effective partnership mechanism in order to strengthen and facilitate multisectoral action to prevent and control these diseases and to aid national action in the fight against them. Additionally, we wish to emphasize the need to take urgent action to promote and facilitate healthy habits such as physical activity, eating healthy
foods, limiting alcohol consumption and curbing the use of tobacco in an effort to prevent the onset of NCDs and the resulting social and economic challenges.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, we wish to give emphasis to the important role of women as agents of change and in the process to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); express our continued support for the important work being carried out by UN Women and other UN agencies, funds and programmes in the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment; and remain committed to working with the international community and all our partners to achieve gender equality and empower women which would benefit all of our societies as well as future generations.

I thank you.