



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Feature Address by

*Ms. Beverly Khan, Deputy Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Planning and Development*

*on the Occasion of the Environmental Management Authority's
World Environment Day Open House*

June 5, 2017

Ms. Nadra Nathai- Gyan, Chairman of the Environmental Management Authority (EMA)

Dr. Roshan Parasram, Director, EMA

Mr. Hayden Romano, Managing Director, EMA

Ms. Rosemary Lall, Programme Officer, Energy, Environment and Disaster Risk Management,
United Nations Development Programme

Ms. Toylan Arnead, Director (Ag), Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA)

Mr. Ronald Roach, General Manager, SWMCOL

Dr. David Persaud, Environmental Manager, Ministry of Planning and Development

Staff of the EMA

Distinguished Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning and Happy Environment Day to you all!

Today, we stand in solidarity with the United Nations and the rest of the world in commemoration of World Environment Day 2017, which is bolstered by the theme '*Connecting People to Nature*'. We also celebrate with the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) its 22nd Anniversary as the key regulatory environmental body in Trinidad and Tobago. On behalf of the Honourable Camille Robinson-Regis, Minister of Planning and Development, who unfortunately could not be present at this event this morning, the Executive and staff of the Ministry of Planning and Development, I extend congratulations to the Board, Management and Staff of the EMA.

World Environment Day is the United Nation's flagship event for encouraging worldwide cognizance and action for the protection of our environment. From 1974, it has been used as the premier driver for raising awareness on emerging environmental issues from marine pollution and global warming, to sustainable consumption and wildlife crime. World Environment Day has grown to become a global platform for public outreach, with participation from over 143 countries annually. Each year, WED has a new theme that major corporations, NGOs, communities and Governments worldwide adopt to advocate environmental causes.

As a Small Island Developing State, the theme '**Connecting People to Nature**' is not far from who we are as a nation. The people of Trinidad and Tobago have a proclivity for connecting with nature, because our very existence, whether socio-economic through oil and gas, trade, our living spaces, recreation and everything else that we do depends on our connection to nature. If this connection is not conducted with the utmost care and consideration for our ecosystems, including

our beaches, watersheds, forests and wildlife, our future generations will have a poorer quality of life. This fragile balance between our existence and our dependence on nature must be met with sustainable development policies to overcome the environmental challenges with which we are faced as small islands.

This year's theme invites us to ponder on our intimate dependence on nature, it appeals to us to embrace and enjoy its beauty and appreciate its importance, and to champion the call and take positive action, collectively and individually, to protect the Earth that we share. The Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, Mr. Erik Solheim urges us to "make the planet great again".

Indeed, we all have a role to play and most of us can do better regarding our treatment of nature. Many of us throw waste materials out of our vehicles and leave footprints of plastic, Styrofoam, aluminum cans, refrigerators and a myriad of other waste items indiscriminately after using them. We all have read or heard, and even seen the effects of such behaviour and yet doing the right thing eludes a large portion of us in society.

To further underscore this point, the 2016 Annual International Coastal Clean-up yielded eighteen million, sixty-two thousand, nine hundred and eleven (18,062,911) pounds of garbage globally, with plastic beverage bottles listed as the second most collected item, with one million, twenty-four thousand, four hundred and seventy (1,024,470) pieces collected. Plastic bags also appeared on the top ten list, with four hundred and two thousand, one hundred and twenty-two (402,122) bags collected. In Trinidad and Tobago, the quantity of waste for this period during the local leg of the International Coastal Cleanup Day was over 30,000 pounds. All from human activity.

Eventually, this ends up in our food chain. Is this the connectivity we want with Nature? I am quite sure that the answer is NO!

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago through the National Development Strategy, Vision 2030, has identified five (5) overarching development goals that are closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). One of our national goals underscores the importance of the environment and, particularly, the magnitude of climate change impacts and the need to source renewable forms of energy. The Vision 2030 Strategy also addresses waste management, not only of solid waste but also other forms of waste such as air pollutants and chemical waste.

In April of this year, the Government took a decision to expand the roles and functions of SWMCOL to become a Waste Recycling Authority in addition to its current functions. This expansion will facilitate the efficient coordination of the national waste management system particularly as it relates to:

- promoting the recovery of waste through recycling and reuse;
- implementing deposit refund systems or any other system to encourage waste recovery;

- promoting business opportunities;
- encouraging a culture of waste minimization among manufacturers, producers, distributors and consumers.

The EMA is also drafting Solid Waste Rules to support these solid waste management and disposal initiatives and we expect that the Waste Rules should be law in 2018.

In the policy approach now being embraced, waste is not only seen as a burden to our society but is being explored as a valuable resource. As far as possible, the intent is to stimulate the development of lucrative downstream waste industries nationally, encourage entrepreneurs, create jobs and protect human health and the environment.

The EMA has already developed a suite of subsidiary legislation for wildlife protection. These include the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) Rules (2001), and the Environmentally Sensitive Species (ESS) Rules (2001), which essentially identify threatened or valuable areas and species, providing protection for these under the law. The EMA designated three ESAs owing to the rich biodiversity and sensitive species which can be found there: the Matura National Park (designated in 2004), the Nariva Swamp (designated in 2006) and the Aripo Savannas (designated in 2007).

The EMA/ Green Fund Wildlife Surveys of game species are in progress and will provide valuable scientific data for the management of our game species.

The National Forest, Protected Areas and Wildlife Policies also provide the policy context for the sustainable management and conservation of, among others, our forest ecosystems and wildlife. These policies offer guidance for the development of legislation that will enable Trinidad and Tobago to establish an appropriate administrative and institutional framework for the management of forests and wildlife as well as the designation of protected areas.

Additionally, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, the Ministry of Planning and Development has initiated the implementation of the 'Improving Forest and Protected Area Management in Trinidad and Tobago' Project. This four (4) year project supports the Government's policy reforms for biodiversity conservation for sustainable management of forestry and protected areas. It will establish six (6) pilot protected areas to model participatory approaches as well as enhance capacity and finance for sustainable natural resource management.

Similarly, the National Restoration, Carbon Sequestration, Wildlife and Livelihoods Project (NRCSWLP) is an internationally recognized initiative coordinated by the EMA and funded by the Green Fund Executing Unit. This Project focuses on the rehabilitation and reforestation of the degraded lands of the Nariva Swamp as well as improvements in fire management, agricultural practices and wildlife research and conservation. The project has gained international significance as it is one of the few initiatives that focus on the restoration of wetlands. During the past five (5)

years, over 300 persons from five (5) communities have been engaged in the replanting of approximately 214 hectares of the Nariva Swamp.

The EMA is also currently in the process of revising the National Environmental Policy (NEP). Engaging the public via consultations was a key part of this course in developing a “blueprint” to guide actions for the successful management of the country’s natural resources. The National Action Programme to address land degradation is also being revised to incorporate specific targets to meet overarching Sustainable Land Management goals which support the protection, restoration and promotion of the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. This involves sustainably managing our forests, combating desertification, reversing land degradation and halting biodiversity loss.

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) which guides actions to manage the country’s biological resources is also being updated.

Trinidad and Tobago has been working toward meeting all its obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), its Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement through several national initiatives. The National Climate Change Policy, which is a national roadmap to address climate change is also currently being revised. A carbon reduction strategy for the country in key sectors which emit damaging greenhouse gases is currently being executed as well as a Low Emission Capacity Building Programme, with support from the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme in support of the transitioning to a low emission pathway.

Furthermore, programmes to address the issue of persistent organic pollutants; as well as the phase out of the use of ozone depleting substances used in air conditioning and refrigeration, and in fumigation are in execution.

Already, Trinidad and Tobago has far exceeded its target relating to the Consumption of Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), which declined from 834 metric tonnes in 2008-2009 to 381 metric tonnes in 2016 (a 55% reduction). Our target for 2020, under Montreal Protocol, is 35 % reduction from the baseline.

In terms of the marine environment, the Institute of Marine Affairs (IMA) recently launched the first State of the Marine Environment (SOME) Report for Trinidad and Tobago which provides a scientifically grounded understanding of the existing conditions of some of our important coastal and marine ecosystems, habitats and species. It also details how these resources have been, and continue to be affected by the range of natural and human pressures to which they are subjected. The Government has since agreed to an action plan for implementing the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Policy Framework to mitigate negative impacts on the coastal and marine environment for the period 2017-2020.

The EMA is now in the process of appointing Environmental Officers to assist in coordination and implementation of various environmental policies and programmes in accordance with Section 33 of the Environmental Management (EM) Act.

It is our resolve that the actions and policies, being pursued by the Government that I have referred to this morning, alongside the actions of private citizens, will ensure the protection, conservation and wise use of our precious natural resources, as it is through the collaborative efforts of all that we will attain a safer, greener and more prosperous future through the preservation of our connection with nature. We need to be more creative and innovative in our approach to natural resource management utilising the best available technology and sound scientific information.

Even so, we can make the right choices to practice sustainable agricultural methods, desist from illegal hunting, stop wanton deforestation, properly dispose of waste material in particular, not dump waste in watercourses, employ measures to conserve water in our homes and businesses, maintain our cars and limit pollutants. We can become regulators at all levels to encourage good environmental practices and, become innovators and proponents of alternative environmentally friendly technologies and solutions.

Keep at heart that the choices we make today, always chart the course of our and our Children's future. And pride in our environment is tantamount to national pride.

I once again congratulate the EMA on its 22nd Anniversary and achievements to date. May you continue to proper and positively impact the development of Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you all for your attention.