



**Opening Remarks
for the
Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry
of Planning and Development:
Ms. Melanie Noel**

**Project entitled: Preparation of Trinidad and Tobago's Third National
Communication and First Biennial Update Report to the United
Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**

**Inception Workshop
Hyatt Regency
Port of Spain**

December 14th, 2017

Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a pleasure for me to bring greetings on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Ministry of Planning and Development at this Inception Workshop for the project entitled: Preparation of Trinidad and Tobago's Third National Communication and First Biennial Report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This undertaking is a collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Trinidad and Tobago has built strong relationships with both of these organizations and I must note that we are quite pleased to be working with them again on this important initiative.

At its core, the Ministry of Planning and Development thrives on collaboration for national development in the areas of human, social and economic development, and of course safeguarding our environment for future generations. We work closely with all Ministries in the Government as well as with the private sector in these areas to develop policies, projects and programmes with the aim of achieving a level of sustainable development for the prosperity and well-being of all citizens.

As you are aware, Trinidad and Tobago, as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) is particularly vulnerable to the severe consequences of climate change, which include, more intense tropical storm activity, sea level rise, increased flooding, and loss of coastal habitat. The vulnerability of Trinidad and Tobago is further compounded by an interplay of a variety of factors, including not only our size, but the fragility of our natural ecosystems; our vulnerability to exogenous economic shocks; limited natural, human and technological resources; limited technical capacity, and limited ability to reap the benefits of economies of scale. A further challenge is the fact that Trinidad and Tobago also emits greenhouse gases (GHGs) through our industrialized and hydrocarbon economy. However, this

challenge also presents a ripe opportunity for us to do what is necessary in order to transform our development path into a more sustainable one. The work we do leading up to these reports is key to us addressing these challenges and helps to plot our path towards the positive future we collectively desire.

Trinidad and Tobago, having ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1994 is obligated to report on our greenhouse gas emissions, mitigation actions undertaken, vulnerabilities assessed and addressed as well as support received. This is what is referred to in the Convention's context as a **national communication**. Trinidad and Tobago has submitted two national communications to date in 2001 and 2013 respectively. This current project is an undertaking to develop the Third National Communication and First Biennial Update Report to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The national communication is a vital medium for the exchange of information on how each country is implementing the Convention and also for highlighting the issues, problems, gaps and constraints therein. This report provides the Conference of Parties (COP) with the information it requires to assess the overall aggregated effects of the implementation of the Convention.

Biennial Update Reports (BURs) were mandated to be submitted by developing country Parties at the 17th Conference of Parties in 2012. These reports are expected to provide an update of the most recently submitted national communication in addition to information on mitigating actions planned or taken, their effects, as well as support needed and received. Trinidad and Tobago regards these obligations as very important and is keen to develop a new greenhouse gas inventory and indicate our efforts as a country to mitigate against and adapt to climate change.

This is especially important in the context of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of Trinidad and Tobago under the Paris Agreement. Under the NDC, Trinidad and Tobago is committed

to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 30% by December 31, 2030 in the public transportation sector. In order to achieve the objectives set and fulfill all commitments, an Implementation Plan for the NDC has been developed and is currently receiving the attention of Cabinet.

The importance of meeting the country's international environmental obligations is also embedded in our national development framework. This is iterated through the National Development Strategy which is more commonly known as VISION 2030, within which an entire theme (THEME V) is devoted to placing the environment at the '**centre of social and economic development**'. Notably, one of the medium term goals (2016-2025) under THEME V is to meet all international environmental agreements. Short, medium and long term goals under THEME V crosscut objectives to reduce our national carbon footprint and improve Trinidad and Tobago's resilience to climate change. Therefore, it is enshrined in our national development moving forward, that climate change action is an imperative.

Further, the national approach to address climate change is articulated in the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) and the Government, through the Ministry of Planning and Development and its Multilateral Environmental Agreements Unit through which the implementation of the Policy is coordinated, has been advancing the national climate change agenda of the country through various initiatives and studies.

Following the adoption of the National Climate Change Policy, the Government in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), completed a review of the existing policy and legislative framework and the identification of gaps along with recommendations. It is expected that once approved, an action plan will be developed to implement the recommendations of this study, which includes the revision and drafting, as required, of relevant policies and legislation to integrate

climate change in national development and sectoral plans. We therefore hope to engage you further in this process when the action plan is being developed.

Trinidad and Tobago also developed a Carbon Reduction Strategy, on which many of you here would have been consulted during its period of development. The Strategy is aimed at identifying appropriate actions and measures that can be taken to reduce, avoid or sequester greenhouse gases in these sectors. As you would appreciate, managing greenhouse gas emissions from all emitting sectors would need to become an integrated activity. We are building the necessary capacity and institutional architecture, including at the regulatory and policy levels which will address recording, reporting and devising intervention options to minimize greenhouse gas emissions, and verifying that these reductions have taken place. Working in this manner is consistent with Government's stated objective of reducing our carbon footprint as espoused in VISION 2030 and the NDC of Trinidad and Tobago.

Another of our key climate change projects is the Low Emission Capacity Building (LECB) project, another collaborative effort with the UNDP. While many of you have been key participants of this project, it may be instructive to remind you that one of its key deliverables is the design of a Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) System. This has been completed in Phase I of the project and a pilot of this MRV system is envisioned to form part of the recently approved Phase II of the project. This undertaking would also be a critical complementary initiative to the project being launched today as the long term vision is that the MRV system would make the reporting of greenhouse gas emissions a routine activity in Trinidad and Tobago so that the future generation of National Communications, Biennial Update Reports and reporting on the country's NDC would be easier, more routine and consistent with international requirements while supporting our national development goals.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has also partnered with the European Union through its Environment Programme to assess climate risk and vulnerability locally. The results of this study were presented to you very recently. These results would serve to inform adaptation actions moving forward under VISION 2030 and will also form part of the National Communication where the country has to report on its assessments of climate change risk and vulnerability.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago will continue to play its part by setting the policy framework and supporting activities, but your input is critical to ensure feasibility and practicality of initiatives as well as ensuring their success. In this regard, I would like to welcome you all and to thank you for coming to this Inception Workshop. I am sure that your presence here today translates into your continued cooperation and commitment throughout the project by continued participation and technical input where necessary. I wish you all a successful workshop.

Thank you.