



**REMARKS
BY
THE DEPUTY PERMANENT SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY
OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

On The Occasion Of

**THE NATIONAL CONSULTATION FOR THE EUROPEAN
UNION – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE ENVIRONMENT
PROGRAM FOR TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

RADISSON HOTEL
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Salutations

- Representative from the European Union – Natasha-Helena ZORIC
Programme Officer, Delegation of the European Union in Trinidad and
Tobago
- Representative from Particip : Johannes Ohnmacht – Project Coordinator
- Representatives from Project Team
- Mr. Kishan Kumarsingh, Head of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements
Unit, Ministry of Planning and Development
- Representatives from all the Sectors in the Technical Working Groups
- Members of the media
- Specially Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the National Consultations for the European Union's – Technical Assistance to the Environment Program for Trinidad and Tobago regarding climate vulnerability and risk assessment.

The rapid increase in industrialisation, coupled with population growth has resulted in an exponential increase in global energy demands. This increase has resulted in a marked rise in greenhouse gas emissions, and a significant change in the earth's climate. The increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions has been identified as a major cause of global warming. Between the years 1850-2016, the average global temperature has increased by 1.5°C [<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/hadobs/hadcrut4/>]. This rise in air and sea temperatures brings with it an increase in the frequency of extreme weather events, and a rise in sea levels as a result of the melting of glaciers. Climate change poses significant developmental challenges for the entire global community and, in particular, countries of

the region and Small Island Developing States. While the need for a global paradigm shift towards sustainable energy is evident, it is of paramount importance that we are prepared to mitigate the effects of climate change in terms of disaster readiness, management and recovery. Preparing to combat the effects of climate change will pose significant challenges to island states in terms of financial, human, technical and technological resources.

Of particular threat to Small Island Developing States is the increase in sea surface temperatures and the resultant rise in sea levels. Rising sea temperatures couples with and overall rise in sea levels will cause the inundation of low-lying coastal areas, and threaten to have a strong negative impacts on fisheries, water resources, agricultural productivity and biodiversity.

Increases in sea surface temperatures also affect the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as hurricanes. We have already seen how disastrous the effects of such hurricanes can be. The 2017 hurricane season broke many records in terms of the number of storms

that became major hurricanes, such as Harvey, Irma and Maria, the with the latter two of which caused devastation to our Caribbean neighbours and previously unseen economic damage. The effects of climate change are already evident in Trinidad and Tobago. Scientific evidence suggests that the country has already experienced an increase in mean surface temperature of about 1.7 °C based on meteorological data for the years between 1961- 2008. The projected impacts of climate change for the region and Trinidad and Tobago over the next few decades include a reduction in the frequency of precipitation events, but a noticeable increase in their intensity. Just earlier this year, Trinidad and Tobago experienced heavy rainfall associated with tropical storm Bret, resulting in widespread flooding throughout the country, which was followed by many other occurrences of floods and landslides due to increased rainfall intensity during the rainy season. The impacts of climate-related disasters have therefore been brought to the forefront in Trinidad and Tobago; economic losses in the form of infrastructural damage, loss of agricultural crops and livestock and of course, the increase in the price of goods which inevitably occurs with high demand and limited supplies.

As you can imagine, the effects of climate change threaten to severely undermine our efforts towards achieving economic and sustainable development. Therefore; effectively identifying and managing climate risks is a necessary measure to aid in achieving our developmental aspirations.

And so, Trinidad and Tobago, in keeping with our commitment to climate change adaptation and mitigation, is a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Agreement, treaties which outline the international response to the global issue of climate change. Locally, climate change action is guided by the National Climate Change Policy, and the project being undertaken is part of the implementation of that policy.

In keeping with the Policy, the Government has already begun to formulate and implement projects and programmes aimed at reducing or avoiding carbon emissions as we begin our journey towards a low carbon development future. This program utilises a “whole government”

approach, by including all sectors which would be affected by climate related events. These sectors include Human Health, Agriculture and Food Security, Coastal Resources and Fisheries, Water Resources, Human Settlements and Infrastructure, and Biodiversity and Finance. The results of climate risk analyses in these sectors will provide the information required for developing approaches to adapting to climate change, in both directly and indirectly impacted sectors.

Therefore, we are happy to note that the preliminary results of the climate risk assessments in the various sectors, including capacity assessments, will be presented at this meeting.

As I conclude, on behalf of the Ministry of Planning and Development and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, I would like to thank the European Union for providing the Technical Support needed to conduct the study. I would also like to recognise the active participation of all the departments of government, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations throughout this process. Indeed, this is setting a new paradigm for climate change action. We, at the Ministry, look forward to

hearing more of the results, and how they can be applied to building climate resilience in Trinidad and Tobago.

And so ladies and gentlemen, I do wish you successful and productive discussions over the course of the next two days.

Thank You.