



**STATEMENT BY
THE PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

ON

**THE OCCASION OF THE REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON
THE CARICOM ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL
RESOURCES POLICY AND
DRAFT ENVIRONMENT ACTION PLAN, 2017-2022**

Hilton Trinidad

August 24

9 am

SALUTATIONS

Dr. Douglas Slater, Assistant Secretary-General with responsibility
for Human and Social Development, CARICOM Secretariat

Dr. Thérèse Yarde, Project Coordinator, Caribbean Hub Capacity
Building ACP-MEAs, CARICOM Secretariat

Mr. Toney A. Olton, Principal Consultant, The Potter Centre and
members of The Potter Centre

Regional Delegates

Specially Invited Guests

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning,

It is my honour and privilege on behalf of myself, the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago to welcome you to our twin island state, and to this Regional Consultation on the Draft Caribbean Community Environmental and Natural Resources Policy and Draft Environment Action Plan, 2017-2022. I trust that during your short stay in the country, your tight schedule notwithstanding, you would find the time to partake in our cultural diversity in this, the land of the humming bird, and a country, renowned for its chutney, steelband and calypso.

This Regional Meeting over the next two days culminates a very thorough and collaborative national consultation process in which I am sure many of you present today would have engaged in within your own territories.

The feedback I have received from the Trinidad and Tobago stakeholders is extremely positive, and it was refreshing to see that something as important as an Environmental and Natural Resources Policy and Action Plan for this Region truly embodies the thoughts and desires of the grassroots people of the Region.

This not only from the perspective of the vision and the mission, but the elaboration of cross cutting issues such as:

- Building Resilience to Climate Change
- Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
- Sustainable Energy
- Multilateral Environmental Agreements
- Management of Pollution
- Management of Chemicals Including Hazardous Materials
- Management, Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
- Sustainable Consumption and Production, and
- Trade and Competitiveness

I am told that there was rich discussion on the importance of the inclusion of cultural issues as it relates to the environment, information acquisition, knowledge transfer and data sharing, and monitoring and evaluation. The point was strongly made in all the breakout groups that as a collective body, countries of the region have baseline data, and what is urgently needed now to develop actions.

The process utilized in finalising this Policy and Action Plan will no doubt will ensure that as a Region we take ownership of this document and incorporate it into decision making at the national level in all of our countries, so as to ensure that we act in concert toward the protection and wise use of the Region's natural resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Trinidad and Tobago has a long history of recognizing the importance of the environment as the basic support system for life on the planet and our precious island. The Main

Ridge Forest Reserve of Tobago was declared a Crown Reserve in 1765, making it the oldest legally protected forest reserve in the Western Hemisphere established for a conservation purpose.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago also recognizes the significance of the local environment and its services to the economy and the culture of its people. As an example, the biological resources of the country provide directly and indirectly, food, medicine, fuel, clothing and shelter especially for a number of rural communities across the country. This is also the same for all of states within the Region. The challenge that is shared by all nations in the Region, is to meet the expectations for improving the quality of life of citizens whilst simultaneously protecting the environment given the ever growing demands placed on these resources.

From a national perspective the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has sought to embrace these challenges and

turn them into innovative opportunities for achieving a practical coherence among environmental, economic development and social policy goals in achieving sustainability.

Toward this end, the Government has sought to put in place an appropriate institutional and legal framework for the protection of the environment. The enactment of the Environmental Management Act which established the Environmental Management Authority in 1995 and the Environmental Commission which became operational in 2000 are just two noteworthy examples of the major initiatives that have been undertaken in the areas of policy development, legislation and institution building.

The Environmental Management Act is an umbrella piece of legislation incorporating important environmental policy statements of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It provides a blue-print for the further development of

environmental policy and legislation and monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.

The Environmental Management Authority, a key component of this environmental management and legislative infrastructure, is an independent administrative body tasked with:

- coordinating, facilitating and overseeing execution of the national environmental strategy and programmes
- promoting public awareness of environmental concerns
- establishing an effective regulatory regime to protect, enhance and conserve the environment

As a result of the regulatory function bestowed upon the Environmental Management Authority there was need for a specialized judicial body, to which the decisions and actions of the

Environmental Management Authority may be challenged. Towards that end, the Environmental Commission was established on October 30, 2000 as a Superior Court of Record and is the first specialized environmental court in the history of Trinidad and Tobago and indeed the Caribbean.

The Environmental Management Act also required the development of a National Environmental Policy that provides a rational, practical and comprehensive framework for environmental management in Trinidad and Tobago. This Policy which was first developed in 1998, and is currently being revised due to the signification changes in the national, regional and global environmental landscape over the years.

The draft Revised NEP has identified six (6) Priorities Areas for Trinidad and Tobago, these being:

- Greening the Economy

- Safe, Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Human Settlements and Infrastructure
- Safeguarding Human and Ecological Resilience
- Sustainable Management of Resources

An Informed, Equitable and Environmentally-responsible Society

- Stewardship and Long-term Sustainability

Ladies and Gentlemen, this Government has placed special emphasis on ensuring the sustainable management of the environment. In this regard, the Draft National Development Strategy (2016-2030), Vision 2030, has been developed which incorporates a separate theme that places the Environment at the centre of our country's Social and Economic Development.

Our Vision 2030 National Development Strategy, aims to provide a broad socio-economic development framework to the year 2030.

It is intended to provide for our long-term development process, inclusive of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As the country's principal strategic planning document, it defines the priorities and overarching thrust of our national development policy. This incorporates achieving sustainable economic growth, through greater diversification of the economy, placing the environment at the centre of social and economic development as well as improving the social conditions and quality of life of citizens in an inclusive and ecologically sensitive manner.

It is within this context, that the CARICOM Environmental Policy and its corresponding Action Plan will work in tandem with our National Environmental Policy, along with our National Development Strategy to improve the management of our country's and region's unique and rich biological heritage.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is need for the development of effective controls and cooperative approaches for this Region to ensure that the natural environment and our own survival are not seriously threatened. The adoption and implementation of the CARICOM Environmental Policy and its corresponding Action Plan throughout the Member States will place this Region in a sound position toward achieving the goal of Regional sustainable development.

I very much look forward to the outcomes of these next two days of deliberation at the Regional leg of Consultations as you:

- Review the outcomes of the national consultation processes so as to identify areas of convergence from the national and sub-regional consultations
- Highlight gaps identified during the consultation process.
- Develop consensus on the proposed structure of Regional Action Plan, and

- Provide guidance on the Road Map to finalization of the policy including key milestones

Let me extend congratulations to CARICOM for its strong advocacy role in the promotion of a regional approach to the sustainable management of the environmental and natural resources of the Community and its Member States.

In closing, I wish you all a productive session with robust and focused discussions. It is my desire that this will help concretize a regional approach to the sustainable management of the environmental and natural resources of the Community and its Member States.

I thank you.