

**Statement by Penelope Beckles-Robinson, Minister of Planning and Development of Trinidad and Tobago, in her capacity as incoming Chair of the CDCC**

**[The Honourable Penelope Beckles-Robinson delivers opening remarks below...]**

**SALUTATIONS**

- Mr Jose Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, Executive Secretary of ECLAC;
- Mr. Joseph Farrell, Premier of Montserrat;
- Ambassador Walton Webson, Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda to the United Nations;
- Fellow Ministers and Heads of Delegation;
- Ms Diane Quarless, Director, Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean for ECLAC;
- Heads United Nations Agencies;
- Distinguished Representatives.

Good morning,

The People and Government of Trinidad and Tobago extend a warm welcome to this distinguished assembly of leaders and delegates on this occasion. We are honoured to be the Host Country of the 30th Session of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC) and its related 8th Meeting of the Caribbean Development Roundtable (CDR).

I am pleased to offer congratulations to Ms. Dianne Quarless, Director, Sub-regional Headquarters for the Caribbean, UN ECLAC, and her team, as well as to my team at the Ministry of Planning and Development, on all of your efforts to make these sessions a reality.

We have stood before global forums time and again, presenting irrefutable evidence of the harsh realities of climate change. The crisis is not some distant threat; it is unfolding before our very eyes, wreaking havoc on our economies, ecosystems, and the livelihoods of our people. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, intense heat waves, shifting rainfall patterns, and the disappearance of species, are not future possibilities — they are our present reality. The time for warnings has passed; now is the time for decisive action to protect the Caribbean and ensure a sustainable future for our region.

It has long been established that geographical isolation, limited resources, and susceptibility to climate change impacts compound our economic, environmental, and social vulnerabilities. Since those unaffected by our peculiar circumstances are unlikely to effectively champion our cause, the obligation lies with us to affirm our right to equally benefit from the providence of this earth. The past exploitation

of our resources by external entities and the inordinate impacts we experience resulting from the indiscriminate actions of others, give us more than just the right to stand up and demand our dues.

But more than this, I would like to emphasise that we also have an obligation to our current and future generations to find a way among ourselves, using our talented and blessed human resources and unique cultural advantages, to simultaneously find indigenous solutions to our challenges while we chart the path for the sustainable development of our Region.

Let this session ignite a renewed commitment among us to stand shoulder to shoulder with our fellow small island developing states, not just within our region, but across the globe. Together, we must confront the challenges before us and forge a path toward lasting, resilient prosperity. It is through the power of cooperation, the pooling of our shared strengths, and the ingenuity of our people that we will build a future that is sustainable, inclusive, and unshakably strong. The time for words alone has passed — now is the time for bold, united action that secures our future and inspires generations to come.

Let us continue our efforts by working together to realise the developmental aspirations of this subregion that is home to us all. Let us also endeavour to strengthen our regional engagement to address the challenges of our time together. United, we stand.

Thank you.