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STATEMENT BY THE
HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



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HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OF THE

REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

AT THE

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN
STATES (OAS)

WASHINGTON, DC

APRIL 09, 2008

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE PAULA GOPEE-SCOON, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AT THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PERMANENT COUNCIL OF THE ORGANISATION OF AMERICAN STATES (OAS) TO PRESENT THE CONCEPT PAPER FOR THE FIFTH SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS IN 2009

Washington DC, April 9, 2008

Your Excellency Michael King, Permanent Representative of Barbados to the Organization of American States and Chair of the Permanent Council

Permanent Representatives

Your Excellency, José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the OAS

Your Excellency Albert Ramdin, Assistant Secretary General

Alternate Representatives

Permanent Observers

Staff of the OAS

Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr. Chairman,

It is my distinct pleasure to address this Special Session of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States and to present formally the final Concept Paper for the Fifth Summit of the Americas which Trinidad and Tobago has the honour to host in April next year. Preparations are well in train for this watershed event under the coordination of the National Summit Secretariat headed by our distinguished Special Envoy to the Americas and National Summit Coordinator, Ambassador Luis Alberto Rodriguez.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, I wish to extend our sincere appreciation to all member states, past Summit hosts, the institutions of the Joint Summit Working Group and the citizens of our hemisphere for their rich contributions, assistance, and advice thus far in this important hemispheric undertaking. We would like to say special thanks to our friends in CARICOM for their continuing support throughout this endeavour. The strength of the Summits of the Americas process rests in part on our ability to build strong consensus around a viable inter-American agenda and an effective implementation strategy.

The unwavering engagement of the OAS Secretariat remains vital to the Summits of the Americas and I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary General, the Assistant Secretary General and the staff of the OAS Secretariat for the support Trinidad and Tobago has received since assuming the chairmanship of the Summits process in September 2006. As we pursue our objective of making the Fifth Summit more inclusive and people-focused, we are convinced that the collaboration with the Secretariat, and indeed with all our partners, will provide the basis for delivering tangible benefits to all our citizens.

As the foremost political institution in the inter-American system, the OAS has been able, through its organs, entities, and high-level meetings to tackle frontally the plethora of issues affecting the development of our countries. In so doing, it has remained faithful to the vision of its founding fathers, an element of which, as enshrined under Article 2(f) of the OAS Charter, is to *promote, by*

cooperative action, the economic, social and cultural development of the Organization's member states. Article 3 (k) of the Charter further reinforces that "*Economic cooperation is essential to the common welfare and prosperity of the peoples of the continent.*" Lest we forget the guidelines of the wise men of 1948, the relatively recent vintage of the Inter-American Democratic Charter records, in Article 12, member states' shared commitment regarding the problems associated with development and poverty.

The Democratic Charter's Article 11 that "*Democracy and social and economic development are interdependent and are mutually reinforcing*" puts in perspective the nexus between prosperity and the dividends of democracy.

Trinidad and Tobago sees the OAS as the natural channel through which the hemisphere's development objectives must be coordinated. There already is a commendable track record of achievement in facilitating dialogue and action in areas such as strengthening democracy, education, labour, science and technology, multidimensional security, sustainable development, culture, gender issues, telecommunications, the rule of law and integral development.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Permanent Representatives,

Trinidad and Tobago is committed to playing its part in regional and international affairs in pursuit of the common good.

We are active participants internationally and within the multilateral system. A former Prime Minister and President, Arthur Robinson was instrumental in the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The headquarters of the Association of Caribbean States, grouping 25 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, is in Port of Spain. We enjoy excellent relations with countries in Asia, particularly India and China whose influences are imbued in the rich and diverse socio-cultural fabric of Trinidad and Tobago as a result of different waves of immigration in centuries past. Our deep ties to Africa have been reinforced by increased bilateral interaction, most recently with Trinidad and Tobago launching its West Africa Energy Initiative to share our expertise in this sector with our African friends.

At the sub-regional level, we execute our regional obligations conscientiously given our Prime Minister's portfolio responsibility in the quasi-CARICOM Cabinet for (i) Crime and Security and (ii) Energy; and we are actively working together with other CARICOM countries towards the establishment of the CARICOM Single Economy having attained the goal of the Single Market in 2006. A few days ago Prime Minister Manning convened a special CARICOM Summit on Security to address issues of concern to our member states and which are similar to those being faced by all our countries throughout this hemisphere. Last September, Trinidad and Tobago hosted a Special CARICOM Summit on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases in light of findings of the CARICOM Commission on Health and Development that, for our sub-region, "*five times as many people die from non-Communicable Diseases as from all the other illnesses combined.*" This is also a global concern given the 2007 Report of the World Health Organization which projects that, by 2030, non-communicable diseases will account for 70% of the deaths of the world's increasingly ageing population. Trinidad and Tobago and CARICOM have now taken decisive action to address our sub-regional situation.

Trinidad and Tobago also intends to build on its strong ties with all countries in the Americas. In respect of the hemisphere's collective goals, Trinidad and Tobago has consistently sought to play its role in the inter-American system. Within recent years, we have had the honour of holding the chairmanship of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD); the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism (CICTE); the Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Education and currently, the Inter-American Conference of Ministers of Labour. We are also integrally involved in the operations of the Inter-American Defence Board (IADB) and in the work of the Committee of Experts on Criminal Matters and Extradition as set up by Ministers of Justice and/or Attorneys General of the hemisphere. Our participation in fora convened by PAHO, the Inter-American Development Bank, CITEL, CIFTA, the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN), among others, is also reflective of our sustained engagement in hemispheric affairs and the value we place on rich collaboration and cooperation.

To date, however, Trinidad and Tobago's confidence in and support for future strides in the hemisphere's progress has not been more evident than in our unequivocal commitment to the Summits of the Americas process and our hosting of the Fifth Summit in Port of Spain in April next year.

Many of the issues facing our countries transcend national boundaries and the highest priority must be given to developing a coordinated sustained regional response. With the Fifth Summit, Trinidad and Tobago will take its rightful place in the inter-American community, by playing a strategic role in bridging ideas among member states and finding common approaches to the major challenges facing our Hemisphere. In this process, we will continue to involve all our CARICOM partners to bring to the forefront the issues and perspectives of our sub-region.

Since assuming the Summits chairmanship in 2006, we have reiterated that, for us in Trinidad and Tobago, the success of the Fifth Summit will be defined by three factors.

First, the Fifth Summit must reconnect with the people of the Hemisphere by developing responses that are relevant to their needs and make a positive difference in their lives.

Second, it must forge a consensus around a viable implementation strategy that engages our regional and national institutions.

Third, the Fifth Summit must serve to renew the commitment to deeper integration and cooperation among member states and regional institutions. The benefits to be derived from stronger hemispheric cooperation must never be underestimated. As individual countries, we all stand to gain considerably by the sharing of resources, knowledge, expertise and information.

In our deliberations on the theme for the Fifth Summit, we carefully examined global trends and possible scenarios for the future. We also could not ignore the fact that poverty, marginalization and inequality continue to incapacitate many of our people and that energy, crime, violence, natural disasters and climate change are all important considerations.

The sad truth is that:

- 96 million of our people live in extreme poverty (defined as less than \$1.06/day, World Bank)

- 400 million say that they suffer some form of discrimination. (Latinbarometro 2006).
- 22 million youth are neither studying nor working and therefore have limited prospects (ILO)
- 1.3 million of our children receive no education beyond primary level. (UNESCO)
- Non-Communicable diseases have become the leading cause of mortality in the Caribbean, causing 10 times more deaths than HIV/AIDS
- 67% of Latin Americans report that they fear being out of work in the next 12 months (Latinbarometro 2006)

Furthermore, Latin America and the Caribbean has the dubious distinction of having the highest level of inequality in the world.

2009 will mark the fifteenth anniversary since the First Summit of the Americas in Miami and so much has changed since 1994. Indeed, the international scenario has evolved considerably since the Fourth Summit held in Mar del Plata in 2005:

- Although the Latin America and Caribbean region has continued to make very encouraging economic strides, a global economic slowdown amidst recessionary trends now threatens to weaken the momentum.
- The price of oil rose to unprecedented levels with the resultant adverse impact on all sectors of our societies.
- Crime and security issues, including the growing incidence of gang activity, have emerged as new threats to the stability of our societies.
- The UN's latest report states that there is a 75% chance of global temperatures rising by two to three degrees over the next fifty years which, in essence, means that we are leaving future generations to face more droughts, hurricanes and rising sea levels. No country is exempt.

Arriving at the theme for the Summit of "*Securing Our Citizens' Future by Promoting Human Prosperity, Energy Security and Environmental Sustainability*" was therefore a challenging task but the final result encapsulates the essence of the vision which Trinidad and Tobago has for our region. The Americas of the future must give all our citizens the opportunity to participate fully in society, to benefit from economic development and growth, and to enjoy peace, security and prosperity in their daily lives.

We are energized by the desire that the Fifth Summit will produce results that are recognized and felt by the average man or woman in the street ...be he or she in Caracas, Kingstown, Lima, San Salvador, Paramaribo, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro, Louisiana, Port-au-Prince, Belmopan or Quebec.

In its development of the theme and the Concept Paper, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has consulted widely. The National Summit Coordinator and Special Envoy to the Americas has met with many of you here in Washington, D.C. and visited many of your capitals to consult with your authorities. We have listened very carefully to your views and examined all of your contributions with eager interest. In the upcoming months, we will move to continue the engagement with member states, institutions and civil society as we proceed to draft the Declaration of Commitment of Port of Spain.

The Concept Paper, distinguished representatives, outlines the paramount issues and strategic initiatives being put forward by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for the Fifth Summit.

Importantly, it also takes into account the views and perspectives articulated by your countries, the institutions of the Joint Summit Working Group and representatives of the region's citizenry since December 6 last year when the preliminary version was circulated for comment. This final document has therefore evolved from being a Trinidad and Tobago document to one in which you can all legitimately claim ownership. This Paper is our Paper – the hemisphere's conceptual framework for the next gathering of the 34 democratically-elected Heads of State and Government of the region.

Mr Chairman
Distinguished Representatives

The Concept Paper integrates the three pillars of the theme for the Fifth Summit – Human Prosperity, Energy Security and Environmental Sustainability – with the common denominator being the cross-cutting issues of democracy, good governance and human rights as well as economic growth and competitiveness.

Human prosperity embraces a multi-dimensional social agenda that integrates essential strategies for achieving human well-being and happiness. The focus is on:

- promoting economic growth and global competitiveness;
- ensuring quality education and training as well as decent employment;
- reducing poverty, crime and violence, inequality and discrimination;
- improving the health status of our citizens by reducing communicable as well as non-communicable diseases;
- ensuring food security and adequate nutrition;
- improving environmental quality; and
- promoting democracy, good governance and human rights.

In terms of energy, the fundamental challenge for the region is to initiate a transition to a secure, low-carbon energy system, without undermining economic and social development.

Very high on the agenda is the diversification of the energy matrix in the region and the movement to cleaner technologies and alternatives such as biofuels, geothermal, wind, solar and hydro-power.

The rising cost of food is now being largely driven by the high cost of energy and the diversion of significant grain supplies to other uses.

The Paper also proposes a governance structure that will allow for a manageable number of mandated actions to be monitored and evaluated effectively to determine the extent to which the policy initiative implemented may need to be adjusted in order to ensure universal reach and applicability in the region.

Mr Chairman, distinguished representatives

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to consulting widely during the lead-up to the Fifth Summit and to hearing, first-hand, from the citizens of the region themselves through civil society groups representing them or via other appropriate channels. As I have reiterated before, the Fifth Summit of the Americas must result in positive, tangible and practical outcomes for the

peoples of the Americas, especially the most vulnerable. Without their views, our efforts would ring hollow.

There is no doubt that the OAS is the foremost forum in the Western Hemisphere for political dialogue and cooperation and that the pursuit of the hemisphere's development goals is a multifaceted process. As we move towards April 2009, we look forward to the contributions which will emanate from the many high-level fora on the inter-american agenda. Closest on the horizon are the Seventh Meeting of Ministers of Justice and/or Attorneys-General (REMJA) later this month, the 38th General Assembly in Colombia in June which will focus on *Youth and Democratic Values*, and the First Inter-American Meeting of Ministers of Social Development in Chile in July. These will be important cogs in the wheel of progress towards the Fifth Summit as will the finalization of negotiations for a Social Charter of the Americas.

In respect of the engagement of civil society, the National Summit Secretariat is in the process of planning a hemispheric civil society forum early next month which will bring together civil society representatives from across the region to engage in a dialogue on the three main pillars of the theme.

As I close Mr. Chairman, I want to assure Member States that work is also progressing well on the logistics for the Fifth Summit. Trinidad and Tobago will meet its responsibilities as host of the Americas in 2009 and will take the necessary action to ensure that your stay is productive and enjoyable.

Finally, I look forward to providing you with an update on the status of preparatory work on the Fifth Summit during the Ministerial Meeting of the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) in early June at the General Assembly in Colombia.

I thank you.