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Trinidad and Tobago

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I. Methodology

1. The National Report for the first Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Trinidad and Tobago was prepared in accordance with the General Guidelines for the Preparation of Information for the UPR. The Ministry of the Attorney General via its International Law and Human Rights Unit adopted a consultative approach in coordinating consultations with Ministries and Government agencies through an Inter-Ministerial Committee comprising members from various line Ministries including representatives from the Trinidad and Tobago Police and Prison Services. See **Appendix III**. This Committee served as the coordinating mechanism for information on the implementation of law and policy in relation to human rights protection and human development. Consultations were held, also, with representatives of civil society of Trinidad and Tobago that allowed for input from a cross-section of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). See **Appendix IV**.

2. Trinidad and Tobago has a very active and diverse civil society and NGO community. While traditional international NGOs such as the Red Cross Society, the Young Men's Christian Association and the Family Planning Association address a varied array of human rights issues, the majority of NGOs in Trinidad and Tobago tend to be focused on a specific topic, such as, either, advancement of women, rights of the child, domestic violence, persons with disabilities, unemployment relief, abuse in all its forms or HIV/AIDS.

3. The local civil society has also evolved to reflect the plural nature of this country, with some NGOs focusing on the advancement of women from specific ethnic and religious backgrounds. Nonetheless, these NGOs do not withhold assistance from women outside of this group who may wish to access their services.

II. Country background

Political and Socio-economic overview

4. The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is an archipelagic State in the southern Caribbean lying off the northeastern coast of Venezuela and just south of Grenada in the Lesser Antilles. The Republic is comprised of two islands: Trinidad, the larger island is 1,864 square miles in area (4,828 square kilometers), and Tobago, the smaller island, which is 116 square miles (300 square kilometers). At the end of 2010, the country's population was estimated at 1,317,714 with an annual growth rate of 0.087%. It is a multi-ethnic society comprising persons of East Indian descent (40%), African descent (37.5%), Mixed ancestry (20.5%), European descent (0.6%), and Chinese descent and other mixed groups including descendants of the indigenous Amerindian peoples (1.2%). As a plural society, Trinidad and Tobago has cultivated harmonious relations among its ethnic groups using a variety of mechanisms to ensure that peaceful co-existence is maintained.

5. The country is a stable parliamentary democracy that has long exhibited all the characteristics of consolidated democracies. This is more evident today than at anytime in the historical development of Trinidad and Tobago as the country is being successfully governed by a coalition Government from May of 2010. Among these are successive peaceful transfers of power between political administrations, a vibrant civil society, respect for the rule of law including adherence to fundamental human rights and freedoms and multiple ongoing channels for expression and representation of the interests and values of citizens.

6. Historically, the country's economy has been energy-based with a petroleum sector dating to 1867, when the first oil well was drilled in South Trinidad. It has pursued economic diversification over the past 30 years, becoming the most developed manufacturing economy within the English-speaking Caribbean with a per capita income of TT\$98,470 [US\$15,300] in 2010. Currently, Energy accounts for 35.7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Construction for 9.9%, Manufacturing for 5.3%, Financial Services for 11.5%, Agriculture for 0.6% and other sectors for 37%.

7. A founding member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the regional economic policy of Trinidad and Tobago has been based on the principles of promoting and supporting the economic health and sustainability of the regional economy and, in that regard, the economic stability of individual members.

8. The country's economy enjoyed robust growth rates averaging at 8% between the years 2000 to 2008. This growth was negatively impacted by the global economic and financial crisis of 2008 to 2009, which saw the Central Government posting a deficit equivalent to 5.8% of GDP for the fiscal year 2008–2009. GDP per capita growth rates for 2008 and 2009 reflected this contraction in the economy, decreasing by 2.4% in 2008, 3.5% in 2009, and 2.5% in 2010. There has since been tentative recovery with GDP per capita projected to increase by 2.5% for 2011. Unemployment figures continue to increase from 4.6% in 2008, 5.3% in 2009 and 6% in 2010. This reflects the sustained local impact of the collapse in global economic growth in 2008 and 2009, and highlights the continuing vulnerability of small economies to exogenous shocks.

9. Since becoming a signatory to the Millennium Declaration in 2000, the Government has redoubled its effort towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Owing to a buoyant economy which experienced 14 consecutive years of growth, the Government was able to make significant progress towards meeting all of the targets established in the MDGs. The confluence of the global financial and economic crisis and concerns about the decline of the economic well-being of Trinidad and Tobago, has not altered the Government's priority regarding the MDGs and improving the well-being of citizens.

10. To date, Trinidad and Tobago has made significant progress in the reduction of extreme poverty and has surpassed the target for universal primary education, with citizens now benefitting from free pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Gender disparity in primary and secondary education has also been eliminated.

11. The welfare of citizens living with HIV and AIDS is another key priority for the Government. With this in mind, the Government is currently in the process of increasing and strengthening systems to guarantee full implementation of its policy of ensuring free universal access to anti-retroviral treatment, quality health care and other systemic support for Persons Living with HIV and AIDS.

12. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is currently engaged in seeking to stem the incidence of violent crime, which has steadily increased over the past decade. This parallels the increase in the vulnerability of country as a trans-shipment point for narco-trafficking given its location along the transit route between the producing South and the consuming North. The current coalition Government has taken drastic steps to reduce the impact of violent crimes in Trinidad and Tobago by the introduction of various pieces of legislation such as; the *Anti-Gang Act, 2011* designed to suppress associations for unlawful activities and better preserve public safety, as well as the *Trafficking in Persons Act, 2011* which not only criminalizes the offence of Human Trafficking for the first time in Trinidad and Tobago but creates very specific protection for women and children who are victims.

III. General and legal policy provisions for the promotion and protection of human rights

A. The Constitution

13. The Independence Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago established Trinidad and Tobago as a sovereign, democratic State on 31 August 1962, with Her Majesty The Queen as Head of State.

14. On 1 August 1976, Trinidad and Tobago adopted a Republican Constitution, which established the Office of the President as Head of State. The Presidency is an independent Office, which plays no part in party politics. The President is elected by an Electoral College comprising both Houses of Parliament sitting together. Whereas the President is the Head of State, the Prime Minister is the Head of Government. Consequently, the President has no direct involvement in the implementation of Government policy. The Constitution vests in the President the power to appoint the Prime Minister, Senators and Judges of the Supreme Court.

15. The Constitution is the Supreme Law and any other law that is inconsistent with the Constitution is void to the extent of the inconsistency. Amendments to the Constitution require a special majority in the Parliament.

16. The Constitution recognizes and guarantees the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. These are the right of the individual to life, liberty, security of the person and enjoyment of property and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law; the right of equality before the law and the protection of the law; the right of respect for private and family life; the right of equality of treatment from any public authority in the exercise of any functions; the right to join political parties and to express political views; the right of a parent or guardian to access a school of his own choice for the education of his child or ward; freedom of movement; freedom of conscience and religious belief and observance; freedom of thought and expression; freedom of association and assembly; and freedom of the press.

17. The Constitution guarantees the right of any individual, who alleges that their fundamental rights enshrined in Chapter 1 have been violated or suppressed or are likely to be, to apply to the High Court to obtain judicial redress.

B. The Parliament

18. Trinidad and Tobago is a parliamentary democracy modeled on the British Westminster system and observes the principle of the separation of powers. The Government consists of the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary.

19. Parliament consists of the House of Representatives (Lower House) comprising 41 Members and the Senate or Upper House comprising 31 Members. Parliamentary elections are held every 5 years to elect the Members of the House of Representatives. Of the 31 Members of the Senate, 16 are Government Senators appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister, and 6 are Opposition Senators appointed on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition. The remaining 9 Senators are appointed by the President in his sole discretion, as Independent Senators representing a broad cross-section of civil society interests. The Constitution vests in the President all executive authority. Responsibility for the day-to-day control and direction of the Government resides with the Cabinet under the leadership of the Prime Minister. The Cabinet is accountable to the Parliament in all matters of public policy. Ministerial appointments are the sole prerogative of the Prime

Minister on the basis of appointments made by the President on the Prime Minister's advice.

20. The Parliament can be dissolved at any point in time during its 5-year term by the President acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister. The Executive arm of the Government must be distinguished from the Legislative branch. Under the Constitution, all executive authority is vested in the President of the Republic. The Constitution also permits the exercise of executive powers to officers, which are subordinate to the Office of the President. Under the Constitution, the Cabinet (comprising of the Prime Minister, Attorney General and other Ministers in Government) has the responsibility for general direction and control of the Government and is accountable to the Parliament.

C. The judiciary

21. The judicial system of Trinidad and Tobago is based on English common law. It is multi-tiered consisting of the Supreme Court of the Judicature and the Magistracy. The Supreme Court consists of the High Court and the Court of Appeal and exercises jurisdiction in civil and criminal matters. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council is the final Court of Trinidad and Tobago. The Magistracy is divided into 13 Magisterial Districts and sits daily to adjudicate over less severe criminal and petty civil matters.

22. In 2004, a special Family Court within both the Magistracy and the High Court was established in Trinidad and Tobago. The Family Court has responsibility for all family matters, including divorce, child maintenance, spousal abuse and for granting paternity orders.

23. Appeals from the Magistracy and to the High Court shall go before the Court of Appeal and appeals from the Court of Appeal shall go before the Privy Council in England. The Chief Justice, who is the President of the Court of Appeal, has the overall responsibility for the administration of justice in Trinidad and Tobago.

24. An Industrial Court was established in Trinidad and Tobago in 1965 as a superior court of record with a status equivalent to that of the High Court. It is a highly specialized Court with unique jurisdiction deriving from its responsibility for dispensing social justice. The principal role of the Court is the settlement of industrial relations disputes and other matters referred to it in relation to the *Industrial Relations Act, 1972* the *Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, 1985*, the *Maternity Protection Act, 1998* and the *Minimum Wages (Amendment) Act, 2000*.

D. Framework for the protection of human rights

25. Trinidad and Tobago is party to, *inter alia*, the following international and regional human rights instruments:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR);
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR);
- International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD);
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction;

- Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC); and
- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the
 - Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime; and
 - Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

26. In addition, Trinidad and Tobago has ratified the 8 fundamental Conventions and 2 priority Conventions under the International Labour Organization (ILO) system. See **Appendix II**.

27. At a regional level, Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory to the Inter -American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (“*Convention of Belem Do Para*”). All treaties, including human rights Conventions must first be incorporated into domestic law before they can be invoked and enforced by the Courts of Trinidad and Tobago.

IV. Promotion and protection of human rights

A. International covenant on civil and political rights

28. Chapter 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago establishes the legal obligations of the State, founded on democratic principles and on the rule of law, in recognizing and promoting the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Among the rights so enshrined are the right of all citizens to equal treatment before the law and to the protection of the law, the right to join political parties and to express political views, freedom of thought and expression, freedom of the press, freedom of association and assembly, and freedom of conscience and of religious belief and observance, within the context of the separation of Church and State.

29. The *Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act, 2003* gives members of the public a general right of access to official documents of public authorities and for matters related thereto. This right is limited only by exceptions and exemptions necessary for the protection of essential public interests and the private and business affairs of persons in respect of whom information is collected and held by public authorities. The passage of this Act demonstrates the State’s commitment to an open, transparent and accountable system of governance, and as a democracy, gives practical expression and recognition of the right of the individual to enquire into any aspect of public policy and to receive a factually correct response.

30. Despite the fact that there have been 2 attempts to subvert the Constitution of the Republic, in 1970 and 1990 respectively, Trinidad and Tobago has no record of arbitrary political detention, imprisonment or exile of its citizens; the perpetrators of these acts having been brought before the Courts to answer the charges. In both cases, those responsible, most of whom were released by the Courts, continue to enjoy all the rights and freedoms of citizenship guaranteed by the Constitution. While Trinidad and Tobago is not a signatory to the Convention Against Torture, successive Governments have repudiated in word and in fact, the use of torture.

31. The existence of several daily and weekly newspapers in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as numerous radio stations featuring several talk shows and call-in programmes that

debate virtually every aspect of national life, underscore the fact that freedom of expression and of the press are existing realities in Trinidad and Tobago. In view of ongoing concerns about the role of the press in a free society, and concerns expressed from time to time by the Government and by the community at large, the media has adopted certain operational guidelines, by way of self-regulation in observance of the acceptable standards set by the industry itself.

32. The principle of good governance remains a key objective of the Government in promoting the sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago. In this regard, the Government is of the view that the people must share in the fruits of national development, with the State providing the opportunity, on a non-discriminatory basis, for each citizen to pursue their individual ambitions and to fully enjoy the right, to the extent of their capability, to contribute to national development.

1. The Ombudsman

33. In keeping with the commitment in the Constitution to ensure the protection of the individual against bureaucratic injustice, the Office of the Ombudsman came into existence in 1977 as a feature of the Republican Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, as an independent, non-political entity by which citizens could seek recourse against administrative injustice. The Ombudsman is thus mandated to provide an impartial, informal and expeditious service to the public by investigating complaints against Government departments, agencies and authorities. This service is made available as widely as possible with 3 permanently established offices throughout the country. In addition, the Ombudsman makes scheduled monthly visits to communities to facilitate individuals with complaints and to educate the general public on their rights and duties as members of a free democratic society.

34. The Ombudsman is appointed by the President after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition and holds office for a term not exceeding 5 years, with the possibility of reappointment. The Ombudsman is accountable only to the Parliament, to which statutory annual reports are made.

2. Right to life, right to liberty and security of the person

35. In Trinidad and Tobago, the protection of the human rights of all citizens is enshrined in the Constitution. Recognising the imperative therefore, of safeguarding the security of its citizens and the need to take decisive measures to halt the incidence and mitigate the impacts of criminal activity, the Government has implemented several measures at the national and regional levels to address these challenges.

36. At the national level, these measures include, *inter alia*, the allocation of greater resources to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS), the provision of additional training in various methods of crime detection, scaled-up recruitment of Police officers, improved benefits for all law enforcement personnel, and the passage of legislation including the *Kidnapping Act, 2000*, the *Anti-Gang Act, 2011*, the *Bail (Amendment) Act, 2011*.

37. Recognising the deleterious effects of the by-products of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and their ammunition, Trinidad and Tobago has benefitted from various multilateral efforts such as the ongoing work of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (UN-LiREC) aimed at firearms destruction and stockpile management, as well as the work of the Organization of American States (OAS) on firearms marking.

38. Bilateral cooperation with the United States of America has facilitated access by the TTPS to “*eTrace*”, a web-based firearm trace request submission system, which has

enhanced the local capacity to monitor the movement of firearms used to commit crime. It is hoped that the Regional Integrated Ballistic Information Network (RIBIN), a regional initiative that targets “crime guns” through ballistic identification, will link with *eTrace* as well as with other international systems, including the US National Integrated Ballistics Identification Network (NIBIN).

39. Trinidad and Tobago has also been an active proponent for the conclusion of an international Arms Trade Treaty to establish common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms.

40. Noting that threats to the security of the person now assume myriad forms given exponential advances in information technology, the Government has pursued the enactment of legislation to protect citizens such as the *Computer Misuse Act, 2000*, the *Electronic Transfer of Funds Crime Act, 2000* and the *Electronic Transactions Act, 2011*. The *Data Protection Bill, 2011*, which seeks to protect the privacy of personal information of individuals entered in electronic format, has been laid in the House of Representatives. In addition, Inter-Ministerial Committees have been established to address information and communication technology (ICT) and to develop a coordinated approach to a cyber security strategy.

41. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has also recognized the need to strengthen the legal framework to address nascent terrorism threats in view of the globalised nature of terrorism and the potential vulnerabilities of Small States. Consequently, it has enacted several key pieces of legislation including the *Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act, 2010*, which provides for the criminalization of financing of terrorism activities; the *Interception of Communication Act, 2010*, which relates to, *inter alia*, the regulation of the interception of communications and the acquisition of the means by which electronic data protected, by encryption or passwords, may be decrypted or accessed; and the *Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (Amendment) (No.2) Act, 2011* which was established to enact the Financial Intelligence Unit that is charged with implementing the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force on money laundering and the financing of terrorism.

3. Access to justice

42. The central tenets of ensuring due process and the equal treatment of all before the law is one of the foundations of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago’s approach to upholding citizens’ rights and freedoms. As the Government agency mandated to reform the criminal justice system through the amendment and introduction of criminal legislation, the Ministry of Justice has embarked upon consultations with key stakeholders as part of the process of legislative reform.

43. The following pieces of legislation are currently under review by the Ministry of Justice:

- The *Indictable Offences (Preliminary Enquiry) Act, 1917* is intended to reduce the length of time between the laying of a charge and the trial in the High Court. It is expected that the trial will take place within 1 year of a charge being laid so as to eliminate the backlog of cases in the High Court;
- The *Legal Aid and Advice Act, 1976* to ensure access to and the provision of legal aid services throughout the country, and to change the eligibility criteria to facilitate access to the system by a greater number of persons;
- The *Sexual Offences Act, 1986* to expand the range and scope of sexual offences covered by the Act, and to repeal and replace the law governing the Sex Offender Registry; and

- The 2004 draft *Prison Rules* to reflect a shift away from the retributive style of penology to one that places emphasis on the successful reintegration of offenders into society.

44. The Ministry of Justice as part of its remit, in collaboration with the Ministry of National Security where necessary, also administers several agencies that are critical in the provision of access to justice:

- **The Police Complaints Authority** is an independent and impartial body investigating complaints against police officers, including municipal and special reserve police officers;
- **The Advisory Committee on the Power of Pardon** provides advice to the President in the exercise of his authority to grant a pardon to any person convicted of an offence against the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, or reduction of his sentence;
- **The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board** provides a simple, effective, equitable and humane means whereby a victim of a crime of violence can obtain compensation for injuries suffered;
- **The Immigration Detention Centre** was established in November 2009 as a mechanism to protect the human rights of persons detained as prohibited immigrants. The facility houses male and female detainees separately and ensures that their fundamental human rights are observed, including the freedom of religious expression. The Centre ensures that all persons classified as prohibited immigrants are housed separate and apart from prison inmates. Additionally, it provides physical amenities for all illegal immigrants, and access to legal representation, educational opportunities, health care, adequate recreation and adequate nutrition, in accordance with international standards. Visits from all categories of persons are also facilitated, in keeping with international best practice;
- **The Penal Reform and Transformation Unit** was established in 2002 to review the penal system. Since then, the authorities have progressively sought to implement reforms in the criminal justice system by moving away from a retributive approach towards a restorative system of justice, to achieve effective rehabilitation and reintegration of persons in the prison system and their families. Victims take an active role in the process, while offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions.

45. The Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service is guided by the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Female prisoners are kept at the Women's Prison which is separate from male prisoners. Persons awaiting court hearings are kept at the Remand Prison. Convicted prisoners are housed at the Maximum Security Prison and the Port of Spain Prison, while male convicts beneath the age of 18 years are held at the Youth Training Centre. Young females are housed separately from adult female prisoners in a secluded area of the Female Prison.

46. Rehabilitative programmes at penal institutions include religious/spiritual counselling, psychological/behavioural counselling, assistance and support with self-awareness, anger management, drug rehabilitation, academic instruction, cultural and sporting activities, as well as vocational training.

47. The Government remains aware that overcrowding is a concern in the Prison system. Trends in the growth of criminality in the country, particularly serious crime, are confirmed by the available statistics. For instance, the number of murders committed in Trinidad and Tobago over the last three years is as follows: 2008 – 547, 2009 – 507 and 2010 – 473. It was for this reason and in order to relieve the problems arising from overcrowding, that the State constructed another maximum security prison in 1994 with a capacity of 2,453 and a

current occupancy level of 1,511 persons. A Women's Prison was also constructed in 2002 with a total capacity of 200, and a present population of 110 persons. While both of these facilities operate under capacity, as a developing country constrained by limited economic resources, the Government acknowledges the need to make improvements in the overall state of prison conditions and is committed to doing this as evidenced by:

- **The Probation Division** was established to provide an alternative to imprisonment for persons under the age of 16, who are convicted of criminal offences.
- **The Witness Protection Programme** provides for the security, safety and support of witnesses, their dependents, judicial, legal and other persons whose lives are in danger as a result of their involvement in the criminal justice system.
- **The Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre** provides forensic pathology and analytical forensic science services.

4. Death penalty

48. Section 4 (a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago recognizes the right of the individual to life, liberty and the security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except by due process of law. Trinidad and Tobago, which retains the death penalty as part of its domestic legal system, is of the view that the application of the death penalty or any other penalty is a criminal justice matter which falls within the national jurisdiction of sovereign States. In Trinidad and Tobago, the death penalty is only applicable for crimes of murder and treason and the country is satisfied that the application of the death penalty is not inconsistent with its obligations under the ICCPR.

49. In the case of *Matthews v. The State [2004]* 64 WIR 412 PC the Privy Council, as the country's final court, held that the death sentence for murder in Trinidad and Tobago is mandatory and not discretionary.

50. However, it should be recognized that before applying the death sentence, due process is carefully observed through the imposition of several safeguards. The first safeguard ensures that if a sentence of death is not carried out within 5 years of the date that the sentence was passed, the sentence must be commuted to life imprisonment. This ruling was based on the Privy Council case of *Pratt and Morgan v The Attorney General [1993]* 43 WIR 340 PC where their Lordships held that prolonged delay in carrying out a sentence of death after that sentence had in fact been passed, could amount to inhuman punishment.

51. The second safeguard entitles a prisoner sentenced to death to appeal that conviction to the Court of Appeal in Trinidad and Tobago and ultimately to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England as the country's final Court of Appeal.

52. The third safeguard relates to the right of a prisoner sentenced to death to make an application to the Advisory Committee on the Power of Pardon by virtue of section 89 of the Constitution. This Committee provides advice to the President in the exercise of his authority to grant any person convicted of any offence against the laws of Trinidad and Tobago, a pardon or a reduction of his sentence.

53. It should be noted further, that implementation of the Death Penalty has been in abeyance since 1999. The Government is in the process of reviewing its laws with respect to the Death Penalty with the intention of adopting a 3-tiered classification of murder with the application of the sentence of death only in the most egregious cases. This remains a matter of ongoing public debate throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

B. International covenant on economic, social and cultural rights

1. Right to work

54. Industrial relations policy in Trinidad and Tobago is based on adherence to the principles of voluntary collective bargaining between employers and workers through their representative associations, for the settlement of the terms and conditions of employment. Additionally, Trinidad and Tobago has ratified the 8 fundamental Conventions and 2 priority Governance Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), signifying the commitment of the Government to the progressive enhancement of labour standards in keeping with international best practice.

55. Trinidad and Tobago is fully committed to realizing the ILO's objective of building a future of Decent Work. In this regard, the Government's Decent Work Policy and Programme of Action, which will provide a tripartite framework for initiatives by the Social Partners to achieve productive, dignified and safe work for all, is targeted for implementation by the end of 2011. The enactment of the *Minimum Wages Order, 2010*, which increased the national minimum wage from TT\$9 to TT\$12.50 per hour with effect from 1 January 2011, demonstrates this commitment to protecting workers' rights and safeguarding the Right to Work.

56. Trinidad and Tobago actively supported the creation of the Convention on Domestic Workers which was adopted by the ILO in June 2011. In keeping with the principles of Decent Work, legislation has been adopted to enshrine the right of Domestic Workers to seek redress at the Industrial Court in the event of their dismissal following complaints of violations of the *Minimum Wages Order, 2010*.

57. In 2010, Trinidad and Tobago established the HIV/AIDS Advocacy and Sustainability Centre (HASC), within the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. The Centre, whose mandate is to implement the National Workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS to ensure the fundamental human rights of Persons Living with HIV and AIDS are respected, is pioneering in the Western Hemisphere.

58. The Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development administers several programmes to address unemployment such as the Unemployment Relief Programme (URP), the Community Contracts Programme, and the National Employment Service (NES).

2. Right to enjoy the highest standard of physical and mental health

59. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago recognises the inextricable relationship between health and human development, and is committed to effecting improvements in the health and general well-being of the population by focusing on health promotion and intervention, to address the most prevalent causes of morbidity and mortality. Among the main policies and programmes that have been implemented are:

- **Financial Assistance to Necessitous Patients**

The Financial Assistance to Necessitous Patients Programme provides financial assistance to eligible patients who cannot afford the necessary medical procedures and medication.

- **Chronic Disease Assistance Programme**

Trinidad and Tobago has assumed a pro-active approach to combating non-communicable diseases (NCDs) at the national, regional and international levels. This includes the establishment of a National Advisory Committee on NCDs to guide strategic interventions in the realm of prevention and control, and the proposal

in 2009, for the convening of a Special Session of the UN General Assembly on NCDs. The Government also launched the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP) in 2003 with the aim of increasing access to treatment by providing free medication to treat specific chronic diseases, including diabetes mellitus, hypertension, glaucoma, certain types of cardiovascular disease and asthma.

60. Through an aggressive legislative agenda in health, the Government has been seeking to enhance the overall quality of the health care system, among other things, through improving relevant standards. To that end, draft legislation in the following areas is currently in the process of being passed – *The National Health Services Accreditation Bill, 2011* and the *National Blood Transfusion Bill, 2011*.

61. An especially important development is the passage of the *Emergency Ambulance Services and Emergency Medical Personnel Act, 2009*, currently awaiting proclamation, which will provide the basis for the establishment of a National Emergency Ambulance Authority, as well as the *Mental Health (Amendment) Act, 2009* which seeks to provide the framework for the admission, care and treatment of persons who are mentally ill.

62. A National AIDS Coordinating Committee (NACC) was established in 2004. The Government is currently in the process of putting in place the relevant institutional arrangements for the constitution of this Committee into a Statutory Body for the coordination, implementation, monitoring and review of all policies related to HIV and AIDS in Trinidad and Tobago. Government policy is one of universal access to care and treatment for HIV and AIDS, and consequently, Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy drugs are available cost-free to all infected persons. Considerable progress has been made in reducing the incidence of Mother-to-Child transmission of the HIV virus with a 100% success rate on the island of Tobago and a reduction to 3% in Trinidad as of 2010. A Human Rights Desk has also been established to deal with issues related to stigma and discrimination.

3. Right to housing

63. Since Independence, Trinidad and Tobago has maintained a policy of State assistance for home ownership for persons at the lower and middle end of the income scale. Successive Governments have taken an active role in filling the gap in the low income housing market through maintaining their own housing construction programme. Between 2002 and 2009, 13, 677 houses were delivered. Under the current collation Government specific initiatives were been undertaken in relation to the right to housing. One example of this is the flagship initiative of the current Ministry of Housing to ensure the immediate expediting of those applications to the Housing Development Company (HDC) which have been pending over 10 years. In addition in the face of extreme flooding in certain parts of the country, the Ministry of Housing has used the HDC to act as a first responder to provide immediate accommodation for needy families.

64. As a separate mechanism, several home financing options that offer the benefit of subsidized mortgage rates, flexible financing mechanisms and tax relief are available to potential homebuyers. These options have gone a long way to increasing the affordability of housing for nationals, and the Government remains committed to facilitating even further, the expanded access of the population to credible housing solutions.

4. Right to education

65. Cognizant of the fact that the right to education is not only a human right in itself, but is also essential for the exercise of other human rights, the Government is committed to ensuring that every child and youth within the 5–16 year age range, has the opportunity to access education, and therefore provides free pre-school, primary and secondary public

education. A Children's Bill is currently before the Parliament, among other things, seeking to amend the compulsory school age from 6–12 years to 5–16 years.

66. The Government-funded Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme has been expanded with the construction of over 50 ECCE centres throughout the country.

67. The State also invests heavily in the provision of social support services, especially beneficial to less fortunate students. These include a school feeding programme in which each day 44,190 breakfasts and 97,831 lunches are served to students enrolled in 822 pre, primary, secondary and special schools. Other services include a school transportation service for all students in school uniform, a school book rental programme which provides main textbooks for all subject areas for both primary and secondary schools, and a school uniform grant. In order to stem the problem of violence and indiscipline in schools, a Violence Prevention Programme has been adopted at both primary and secondary levels.

68. A radical new innovation is the provision of laptops to all students entering secondary school as part of the "*e-Connect and Learn*" School Computerisation/ICT in Education Programme.

69. While Trinidad and Tobago has achieved gender parity in education, it is now faced with the converse problem of the lower enrolment and success rate among boys. This is a cause for concern and the Government is working with various stakeholders to address this issue.

70. The Government places equal emphasis on access to education as on quality. To that end, the National Curriculum Council has been established as well as a Teacher Professional Development Programme, which focuses on modernising teaching methods and teacher training. Consistent with its policy to create a knowledge society based on continuous learning, the State also provides financial assistance for tertiary-level education to the tune of 100% for undergraduate and 50% for postgraduate level.

5. Rights of persons with disabilities

71. Legal protection of the rights of persons with disabilities derives from the Constitution and the *Equal Opportunity Act, 2000*. A Disability Affairs Unit within the Ministry of the People and Social Development and a National Coordinating Committee on Disability are in operation. The Government is currently considering the Draft National Policy on Persons with Disabilities, as well as, a draft Disabilities Bill.

72. The State has adopted a broad programme, among other things, to operationalise the access rights of the differently-abled and to ensure their safety and independence. This followed a landmark ruling in 2007 which declared that the State had violated the fundamental human right of the disabled community to access Government offices. In August 2010, an elevator was installed at a walkover above a major highway in northern Trinidad, facilitating access by an estimated 75 differently-abled persons representing approximately 5% of the average daily pedestrian traffic. Several sidewalks have been modified to permit access by both wheelchair users and visually impaired persons. Buzzers have been installed at all traffic signals to assist visually impaired persons in crossing the roadways. Furthermore, the Government provides financial assistance in the form of a grant of TT\$5,000 to purchase aids and assistance devices, such as, for example, wheelchairs. The Public Transport Service Corporation provides a dial-a-ride service to transport differently-abled persons to work, to school, to Government offices and to the supermarket.

73. The Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development has launched a comprehensive programme to promote and encourage the integration of persons with disabilities into the labour market in both the public and private sectors. A pilot project in

the Public Service is now in operation facilitating the employment of 30 differently-abled persons.

6. Rights of the elderly

74. Approximately 11% of the national population comprises persons 60 years and over, with this group projected to reach 20% by 2025. Accordingly, Government policy is focused on preparing for a “society for all ages” through implementing measures in accordance with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Regional Strategy for its Implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean.

75. The Division of Ageing in the Ministry of the People and Social Development coordinates all ageing initiatives in Trinidad and Tobago, through the implementation of the National Ageing Policy launched in 2007. This policy prioritizes 12 areas for State intervention, namely social security, income security, social inclusion, health care, housing, education, recreation, dignity and respect, legislation, research, transportation and disaster preparedness.

76. Updated legislation to strengthen the protection of the human rights of older persons in institutions providing long-term care, was approved by the Parliament in 2007. Recognizing, however, that 95% of our elderly citizens live in non-institutionalized settings in the community, a Draft National Community Care Policy has been developed to guide the delivery of health and social support services to the aged in the community.

77. Non-contributory pensions to all persons 65 years and over were increased in 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007 and again in 2010, when the maximum Senior Citizens’ pension was increased to TT\$3,000 per month. Persons aged 60 years and over are also entitled to free public transportation. Pensioners also benefit along with the general population from the Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP), whereby the Government funds 100% of the cost of medication for the treatment of certain non-communicable diseases, including hypertension, diabetes, heart disease and certain cancer therapies.

7. Cultural rights

78. As a multicultural society, Trinidad and Tobago celebrates its rich cultural diversity and heritage. National cultural policy is therefore founded on the view that diversity is the source of the nation’s strength and acknowledged artistic creativity and as such, represents an integral aspect of its heritage and indeed its future. Successive Governments have therefore placed great emphasis on the development and pursuit of a dynamic cultural policy, founded on the principle of respect for, and appreciation of, the various ethnic strands that comprise the cultural mosaic of modern Trinidad and Tobago.

79. The Government provides scholarships directly, as well as through its international cooperation programmes, for the advanced training of nationals in various genres of cultural studies. Freedom of cultural expression is not only a recognized right, but is in fact nurtured by the Government through the Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism, by providing subventions to community groups and cultural organisations, to defray the costs of staging major cultural events and festivals.

80. In order to give a fillip to the full development of local culture with a view to enhancing its economic contribution to the nation, the Government has taken the strategic decision to increase its investment in cultural infrastructure. In this regard, the National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA), a state-of-the-art theatre facility equipped with classrooms for the delivery of training workshops was completed and commissioned in the capital city in 2009. A similar facility, the Southern Academy for the Performing Arts (SAPA), is scheduled for completion in the second city, San Fernando, in October 2011 at a cost of TT\$350 million.

8. Delivery of social services

81. The Ministry of the People and Social Development has undertaken the following initiatives in relation to the delivery of social services:

- Direct Impact Initiative, which is a community based effort to take service delivery into residential areas across the country and assist persons who are unable to access services such as grants to purchase food.
- Direct Effect Initiative, this is an actual walk about in communities throughout the country where the Ministry goes to homes of individuals who may be homebound due to disability or age. An assessment is done of services needed and same are provided to such persons.
- The National Commission for Self Help, this arm of the Ministry has been visiting communities where residents have received immediate assessments for projects which the Ministry can assistance with.
- A geriatric adolescent partnership programme GAPP
- Bus services for the disabled.
- A clothing grant.
- An Emergency Cases Fund.
- A pharmaceutical grant.

C. Convention on the elimination of racial discrimination

82. The Government is committed to building a nation that draws strength from its ethnic and cultural diversity. While the Constitution guarantees each citizen the fundamental rights and freedoms recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the passage of the *Equal Opportunity Act, 2000* was a milestone in combating racial and religious discrimination. The Act prohibits discrimination in employment, education, housing and the provision of goods and services, regardless of ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, origin or disability status.

83. The Act establishes the Equal Opportunity Commission which came into existence in April 2008, whose core functions include, investigating and conciliating allegations of discrimination and publishing appropriate guidelines for the avoidance of discrimination. The Equal Opportunity Tribunal established by the Act is responsible for hearing and determining complaints referred to it by the Commission.

84. Trinidad and Tobago's legislation also accords equal recognition to the forms of marriage of all major religious denominations. It is the practice that on important State occasions requiring a devotional input, this takes the form of an inter-religious offering with representation from the major religious groups.

85. In keeping with the State's commitment to promoting social cohesion, the Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism develops programmes that showcase Trinidad and Tobago's multi-ethnic, multicultural society guided by the principles of fair and equal treatment. Each group's major religious festival is an observed public holiday and in addition, public holidays have been proclaimed to mark days of particular historical ethnic significance. In giving effect to its policy of non-discrimination, Trinidad and Tobago has also adopted legislation to prohibit racial discrimination in respect of access to all private and public facilities offering leisure and entertainment services to the public.

86. The State also fully endorses the work of the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO), a non-governmental organization formed in 1970, whose chairmanship is rotated among the various heads of all major religious groups represented in Trinidad and Tobago. The IRO offers objective commentary on many of the social questions affecting the country, as well as for fostering religious tolerance, acceptance and inter-religious harmony by organizing inter-religious ceremonies and by encouraging the citizenry to participate in the religious festivities of other religions.

D. Convention on the rights of the child

87. Trinidad and Tobago has been proactive in taking a number of measures to protect its children from all forms of discrimination and abuse. In this regard, the *Education Act, 1996*, prohibits the denial of any child from entry into a public school on any grounds and the *Equal Opportunity Act, 2000* guarantees equal access by all children to all school benefits, facilities and programmes. It should be noted that Trinidad and Tobago has achieved Millennium Development Goal 2 (MDG2) of Universal Primary Education and target 3 of MDG3 on Eliminating Gender Disparity in Primary and Secondary Education. The Government intends to bring legislation to extend the mandatory age of school enrolment from 6 to 12 years to 5 to 16 years.

88. In order to strengthen the legal framework for the safety and security of children, in response to child abuse in the society, the Government brought to Parliament in the year 2000, the *Children's Authority Act, 2000* which proposed the establishment of the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago as the guardian of the children of the country. The Government also developed legislation for the licensing and regulation of nurseries and community residences. The Government recently launched a renewed campaign to improve the legal and operational framework for child protection including provisions for tougher penalties for child abuse and negligence.

89. Acting swiftly, the Government has now fully constituted the 9-member Children's Authority under the chairmanship of a retired senior female Judge of the High Court. In the year 2008, Parliament passed the *International Child Abduction Act, 2008* incorporating into domestic law, the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, which facilitates the return of children illegally removed from the jurisdiction to that of any Contracting State.

90. Trinidad and Tobago has no policy of offering its children for international adoption and in accordance with relevant ILO Conventions, strictly prohibits the use of child labour in any form. It should also be noted that corporal punishment has long been abolished from the education system.

91. In 2011, Parliament assented to the Trafficking in Persons Act to give effect to the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

92. In order to bring relief to children requiring expensive specialised medical treatment not available in Trinidad and Tobago, the Government, on the personal initiative of the Prime Minister established the Children's Life Fund through the *Children's Life Fund Act, 2010*, with a target capitalization of TT\$100 million. As a show of leadership, the Cabinet accepted a 5% cut in their remuneration with the proceeds allocated to the Fund. The Fund is open to contribution from all individuals, civil society organisations and philanthropic societies at home and abroad. Between May 2010 and April 2011, a total of 23 children ranging in age from 2 months to 14 years have become beneficiaries of life-saving surgery or treatment overseas to the extent of TT\$6.4 million.

E. Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women

93. In 1971, a Woman's Bureau was established by the Government to address the underemployment of women, and to deal with the broader issues of women's health, family planning and education. That Bureau has been expanded to form the Gender Affairs Division of the Ministry of Planning, Economic and Social Restructuring and Gender Affairs.

94. Over the years, Parliament has enacted several major pieces of legislation for the protection of women from violence, discrimination and abuse including the *Offences Against the Person Act, 1925*, the *Domestic Violence Act, 1999*, the *Sexual Offences Act, 1986* and the *Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, 2000*, the *Public Assistance Regulations, 1997*, the *Maternity Protection Act, 1998*, the *Cohabitation Relationships Act, 1998*, the *Legal Aid and Advice Act, 1976*, the *Equal Opportunities Act, 2000* and the *Trafficking in Persons Act, 2011*. In 1990, Trinidad and Tobago ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and in this regard, the Government has already completed an appraisal of all laws containing discriminatory provisions vis-à-vis women and which require amendment in order to bring them into conformity with the Convention. A Draft National Gender Policy, the focus of which is to advance the principles of gender equality and equity and to mainstream gender into national development strategies, is currently before the Government for consideration.

95. In a Commonwealth survey published in 2011, entitled "Because you are a girl; growing up in the Commonwealth", Trinidad and Tobago ranked third out of 54 Commonwealth Members as the best place for raising a female child.

96. Spousal abuse, which generally takes the form of violence against women, remains a critical area of concern to the Government. In 2005, Parliament adopted an amendment to the *Offences Against the Person Act, 1925* expanding the range of offences constituting harassment to include stalking, bullying and intimidation. The *Domestic Violence Act, 1999* obliges the Police to respond to all complaints and keep a detailed record for inclusion in the National Domestic Violence Register. Initiatives are advanced for the establishment of a central registry as a clearing house for all data on domestic violence. Marital rape constitutes a criminal offence in Trinidad and Tobago.

97. To advance gender parity, Trinidad and Tobago became in 1996, the first country in the world to enact legislation for the recording and economic valuation of unremunerated work by women, with the *Counting Unremunerated Work Act, 1996*. Trinidad and Tobago is a party to the Equal Remuneration Convention (1951) of the ILO and the Government scrupulously honours this undertaking in its remuneration arrangements. Trinidad and Tobago actively supported the creation of a Convention on Domestic Workers which was adopted by the ILO in June 2011.

98. The statistics bear out the improvements in the participation and representation of women in public life. An important milestone for Trinidad and Tobago was the election of the first female Prime Minister in May 2010 who also became the first female Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth. Prior to her election as Prime Minister, she was notably sworn in as the first female Leader of the Opposition.

99. Upon her assumption of office, the Prime Minister ensured that gender equality and empowerment became a key national policy for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. An example of such an initiative is the High Level Colloquium of Women World Leaders to be held during the final quarter of 2011, as a call to action for women leaders to use their resources and combined consciousness to improve the lives of poverty stricken women, and provide them with the right tools to empower their lives.

100. A woman served as Speaker of the House of Representatives (1991–1995), while another served as President of the Senate (2002–2007). The House of Representatives comprises 41 members of which 12 are women. The Cabinet comprises 27 members of which 5 are women including the Prime Minister. There are 23 female Justices sitting on the Bench in the High Court and out of a total of 56 magistrates, 37 are women. Recent promotions in the top ranks of the Police Service, included the ground-breaking appointment of 3 female police officers to the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police. Women hold top executive positions in private sector organisations in Trinidad and Tobago.

V. Achievements and best practices

101. Victim Support Units

- Victim Support Units staffed by professionals in psychology and sociology were established within the Police Service to provide support to victims of domestic violence, sexual offences and crimes of a highly sensitive and personal nature.

102. Universal Primary and Secondary Education

- Trinidad and Tobago has achieved universal primary and secondary education in fulfilment of the UNESCO mandate of “Education for All”;
- Trinidad and Tobago has achieved Millennium Development Goal 2 (MDG2) of Universal Primary Education and target 3 of MDG3 on Eliminating Gender Disparity in Primary and Secondary Education;
- Strategic policy was enacted by the Government beginning in 2011 to provide all incoming secondary school students with a laptop computer as part of its “eConnect and Learn” School Computerisation/ICT in Education Programme;
- Provision of social support services to students:
 - Each day 44,190 breakfast and 97,831 lunches are served to students enrolled in 822 pre, primary, secondary and special schools as part of a school feeding programme;
 - School transportation service for all students in school uniform;
 - School book rental programme to provide main textbooks for all subject areas for both primary and secondary schools; and
 - School uniform grant.

103. State Funding for Tertiary Education

- 100% State funding for undergraduate degrees and 50% for postgraduate studies. The Government has also expanded the Government Assistance for Tertiary Education Programme (GATE) to include additional academic and vocational institutions. As well as free postgraduate tuition is also provided to students who achieved first class honours;
- The number of national scholarships was increased.

104. Public Health

- Establishment by Government in 2010 of a registered charitable organisation constituting the Children’s Life Fund to finance specialised medical treatment for children that is not available in Trinidad and Tobago;

- 100% State funding for medication for non-communicable diseases and free testing at community drop-in centres for diagnosis of these diseases;
- Provision of state-of-the-art cancer therapies, cost-free to cancer patients;
- Establishment of the School Health Programme for mandatory audio-visual testing of all children entering all public and private primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago;
- Provision of Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy drugs cost-free to all HIV and AIDS infected persons.

105. Labour

- Establishment in 2010 of the HIV/AIDS Advocacy and Sustainability Centre (HASC) within the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, to implement the National Workplace Policy on HIV and AIDS and to ensure that the fundamental human rights of Persons Living with HIV and AIDS are respected.

106. Disability

- State grant of TT\$5,000 towards the purchase of aids and assistance devices such as wheelchairs and assistive technologies;
- Provision to differently-abled persons of a dial-a-ride service for transportation to work, school, to Government agencies that offer services to the public, and to the supermarket.

107. Discrimination against Women

- Trinidad and Tobago elected its first female Prime Minister in May 2010, who also became the first female Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth;
- Trinidad and Tobago became in 1996, the first country in the world to enact legislation for the recording and economic valuation of unremunerated work by women, and actively supported the creation of a Convention on Domestic Workers which was adopted by the ILO in June 2011;
- In a Commonwealth survey published in 2011, entitled “Because you are a girl; growing up in the Commonwealth”, Trinidad and Tobago ranked third out of 54 Commonwealth members as the best place for raising a female child.

VI. Challenges and constraints

108. Trinidad and Tobago bases its legal and constitutional framework on the “Rule of Law” which is the fundamental approach taken to protect human rights. There are many variables which affect the ability of a State, at any given time, to influence how its laws and policies protect the rights of individuals. Some of the challenges faced by this country are enumerated hereunder:

- **Crime**

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is currently engaged in seeking to stem the incidence of violent crime, which has seen steady increases over the past decade. This parallels the increase in the vulnerability of country as a transshipment point for narco-trafficking given its location along the transit route between the producing South and the consuming North.

- **Education**

While Trinidad and Tobago has achieved gender parity in education, it is now faced with the converse problem of the lower enrolment and success rate among boys. This is a cause for concern and the Government is working with various stakeholders to address this issue.

- **Rights of the Elderly**

Recognizing, that 95% of our elderly citizens live in non-institutionalized settings in the community, a Draft National Community Care Policy has been developed to guide the delivery of health and social support services to the aged in the community.

VII. National priorities and commitments

109. The policy of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is guided by the following Seven Interconnected Pillars for Sustainable Development which were developed in accordance with efforts towards achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs):

- **Pillar 1: People-Centered Development**

The focus of people-centered development is to facilitate a knowledge-driven economy based on a strong basic educational system and significant participation in tertiary education.

Following consultations with civil society, a panel of NGOs focused on women's rights, recommended that child care facilities in the work place should be mandated across all organizations. A panel of NGOs on the rights of the child also recommended the establishment of a child abuse register and a strategy to address the problem of lower enrolment and success rate among boys. These recommendations are receiving the consideration of the Government.

- **Pillar 2: Poverty Eradication and Social Justice**

The number of people who continue to live under the poverty line is about 20%. The Government is committed to addressing poverty eradication, closing the divide between the rich and the poor and providing a safety network for the poor and vulnerable.

During consultations with civil society, a panel of NGOs focused on social, economic and cultural rights recommended more stringent monitoring of discrimination and abuse of the elderly and is receiving the consideration of the Government.

- **Pillar 3: National and Personal Security**

This is a critical area of focus for the Government. In order to implement this strategy, the Government has been restructuring the prison system, reorganizing the justice system, revamping the Office of Disaster Preparedness and generally, making interventions of a proactive and preventative nature.

Following consultations with civil society, there was a recommendation for NGOs to collaborate with government agencies to provide training to police units in treating with domestic violence, which is receiving the consideration of the Government.

- **Pillar 4: Information and Communication Technologies**

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the systems that they create are fundamental to the development of every modern, progressive society. The Government intends to expand the country's internet connection capabilities to

allow access by every citizen and to facilitate the conduct of business using a wide range of governmental services. IT-based learning is being infused in education at primary and secondary levels to support and complement other forms of teaching, learning and basic research.

Following consultations with civil society, a panel of NGOs for social, economic, and cultural rights recommended that there should be specific mechanisms related to the archiving of cultural heritage. This recommendation is receiving the consideration of the Government.

• **Pillar 5: A More Diversified, Knowledge Intensive Economy**

Although the energy sector continues to be the major contributor to the economy, the Government has recognized the limitations of this resource for long term sustainability and is turning its attention to the services sector. The focus of Pillar 5 is in providing critical support to the services sector by infusing elements of the creative economy in all other sectors while seeking opportunities for the establishment of niche, skills-intensive manufacturing in order to ensure that the economy is resilient and that there are long term economic opportunities for citizens.

• **Pillar 6: Good Governance**

The focus in this area is on three key elements for the purpose of ensuring transparency, accountability, participation and effective representation as essential principles of good governance. These are:

- strengthening existing institutions;
- enhancing democracy; and
- strengthening execution and delivery capacity.

• **Pillar 7: Foreign Policy**

The Government's foreign policy is based on the perspective that the international arena and the world system is a space of opportunity to build partnerships, to leverage resources and to influence the direction of decision-making regionally, across the hemisphere and globally.

VIII. Expectations of the State

110. This National Report for the first Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Trinidad and Tobago demonstrates that the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has made major strides in undertaking its human rights agenda. In the future, the Government remains committed to addressing gaps in implementation, the majority of which are already receiving the attention of the Government.
