

**STATEMENT BY  
DR. THE HONORABLE VINCENT LASSE  
MINISTER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT  
IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT, REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD & TOBAGO  
ON BEHALF OF MEMBER STATES OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) AND  
HAITI  
TO THE FOURTH CONFERENCE OF PARTIES (COP4) OF THE UNFCCC  
BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA  
NOVEMBER 12, 1998**

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MADAME PRESIDENT, IT IS A GREAT HONOUR FOR ME TO ADDRESS THE FOURTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES ON BEHALF OF MY COUNTRY, THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO AND THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS OF CARICOM, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, BARBADOS, THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS, BELIZE, GRENADA, GUYANA, JAMAICA, AND ST. LUCIA; AND ALSO, HAITI WHICH IS EN ROUTE TO BECOMING A FULL MEMBER OF CARICOM.

MADAME PRESIDENT, ALL OF THE COUNTRIES, FOR WHICH I SPEAK, CAN BE CHARACTERISED BY THEIR VULNERABILITY. THIS CAN TAKE MANY FORMS AND IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF ECONOMIC GLOBALISATION, THE DIFFICULTIES OUR COUNTRIES FACE ARE FURTHER INCREASED. WHETHER WE SPEAK OF OUR VULNERABILITY TO ECONOMIC FORCES AND POLICIES OVER WHICH WE HAVE LITTLE OR NO CONTROL, OR, OF OUR VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATIC CHANGE. THE FACT IS THAT THE COUNTRIES OF CARICOM ARE AMONG THOSE AT HIGHEST RISK. THE PHENOMENON OF CLIMATE CHANGE WHICH THREATENS COUNTRIES ALL OVER THE WORLD IS THEREFORE OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE TO SMALL ISLAND AND LOW-LYING COASTAL DEVELOPING STATES. A PARTICULAR CONCERN, IS THE POTENTIAL DAMAGE TO OUR CORAL REEFS AND MARINE BIO-DIVERSITY, RESOURCES THAT SUSTAIN OUR ECONOMIES AND WAY OF LIFE.

IN OUR STATEMENT TO COP3 LAST YEAR, WE POINTED OUT THAT OUR REGION ALREADY SUFFERS HEAVILY FROM A HIGH INCIDENCE OF TROPICAL CYCLONES, AND THAT RISING SEA LEVELS, COUPLED WITH THE ANTICIPATED INCREASES IN THE FREQUENCY, AND INTENSITY OF THESE CYCLONES, AS A RESULT OF GLOBAL WARMING, WOULD EFFECTIVELY DEVASTATE MOST, IF NOT ALL, OF OUR VITAL INFRASTRUCTURE, AND THREATEN THE LIVES OF A MAJORITY OF OUR POPULATION. IN THE SHORT TIME SINCE KYOTO, WE HAVE EXPERIENCED TWO OF THE MOST DEVASTATING HURRICANES THE REGION HAS EVER SUFFERED - GEORGES AND MITCH. I WOULD LIKE TO USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXTEND OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO THE PEOPLE OF THOSE COUNTRIES WHO BORE THE BRUNT OF THESE TRAGEDIES.

MADAME PRESIDENT, IT IS THEREFORE NOT ONLY PART OF OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, BUT IN THE INTEREST OF OUR LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY, AND INDEED, IN SOME CASES, OUR VERY SURVIVAL, THAT WE CONTINUE TO WORK WITHIN GROUPS SUCH AS AOSIS, GRULAC, G-77, AND CHINA, AND THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, TO SECURE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE KYOTO PROTOCOL. A NUMBER OF CARICOM MEMBER STATES, INCLUDING ST. LUCIA AND ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES HAVE SIGNED, AND I HAVE JUST BEEN ADVISED THAT THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS WILL BE SIGNING THE PROTOCOL WITHIN THE COMING WEEK. SEVERAL MORE ARE ABOUT TO SIGN, AND ONE, ANTIGUA & BARBUDA, HAS ALREADY RATIFIED. WE CALL ON ALL PARTIES, WHO HAVE NOT YET DONE SO, TO SIGN AND RATIFY THE PROTOCOL SO THAT IT MAY ENTER INTO FORCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

MADAME PRESIDENT, THE URGENCY OF THIS SITUATION WHICH WE FACE DOES NOT ALLOW US THE LUXURY OF WAITING FOR ACTION SOLELY BY OTHERS. WE HAVE BEEN WORKING INDIVIDUALLY, AND COLLECTIVELY, WITHIN OUR REGION TO MEET OUR COMMITMENTS, UNDER THE CONVENTION AND TO PLAY OUR PART IN THIS VITAL GLOBAL EFFORT. AS A REGION, CARICOM STATES ARE INVOLVED IN A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITY FUNDED PROJECT AIMED AT ENCOURAGING THE USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY. ALSO, CARICOM STATES ARE PRESENTLY IMPLEMENTING THE GEF-FUNDED CARIBBEAN PLANNING FOR ADAPTATION TO GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECT OR CPACC. THIS PLANNING STAGE IS CURRENTLY BEING SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED. IN FACT, MADAME PRESIDENT, IN THE MOST RECENT REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS TO THE UN'S COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CPACC WAS DESCRIBED AS, AND I QUOTE, "... THE MOST SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVE SEEKING TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE ..." UNQUOTE. THIS WILL CONSIDERABLY INCREASE OUR REGION'S CAPACITY IN VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT AND ADAPTATION PLANNING.

MOST CARICOM MEMBER STATES ARE IN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING THEIR INITIAL NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE CONVENTION. THIS PROCESS WOULD HAVE BEEN FURTHER ADVANCED HAD THE NECESSARY EXTERNAL FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT BEEN PROVIDED IN A TIMELY MANNER. INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES ARE ALSO ACTIVELY IMPLEMENTING POLICIES AND DEVELOPING AND APPLYING TECHNOLOGIES TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE, CLIMATE-FRIENDLY, DEVELOPMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE ARE PROGRAMMES FOR THE PROMOTION OF CLEAN, EFFICIENT, AND COST-EFFECTIVE METHODS OF ENERGY PRODUCTION, SUCH AS THE USE OF:

- SOLAR WATER HEATERS,
- COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS (CNG) AS A VEHICULAR FUEL,
- HYDRO-POWER,
- WIND ENERGY, AND
- BIOMASS.

BUT, MADAME PRESIDENT, WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE ON OUR OWN IS CONSTRAINED BY OUR LIMITED RESOURCES, AND THE MANY COMPETING DEMANDS PLACED UPON THEM. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL FOR US TO CONTINUE AND INCREASE OUR EFFORTS AS RESPONSIBLE MEMBERS OF THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY. WE HAVE IDENTIFIED A NUMBER OF PRIORITY AREAS IN WHICH WE URGENTLY REQUIRE SUPPORT. THESE INCLUDE SUSTAINED TRANSFER OF INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY AS WELL AS CAPACITY-BUILDING, AND INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING. AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES SUCH AS THE CPACC, SUPPORT FOR FURTHER ADAPTATION AND RELATED PROJECTS IS CRITICAL.

FINALLY MADAME PRESIDENT, IN ANTICIPATING THE EARLY ENTRY INTO FORCE OF THE KYOTO PROTOCOL, I WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS ON SOME OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED FLEXIBILITY MECHANISMS. WE, THE CARICOM STATES WOULD LIKE TO EMPHASISE THE NEED FOR CLEAR GUIDELINES FOR ELIGIBILITY OF PROJECTS, TRANSPARENCY, VERIFIABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY, RIGOROUS MONITORING AND REPORTING OF ALL THE MECHANISMS. FURTHER, MADAME PRESIDENT, IN KEEPING WITH THE SPIRIT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CONVENTION AND THE KYOTO PROTOCOL, FLEXIBILITY MECHANISMS SHOULD NOT, I REPEAT NOT BE EMPLOYED BY ANNEX I AND ANNEX II COUNTRIES AS A MEANS OF EVADING THEIR DOMESTIC OBLIGATIONS.

FOR OUR REGION, THE CLEAN DEVELOPMENT MECHANISM IS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST. WE, THEREFORE, URGE THAT EVERY ATTEMPT BE MADE TO PROVIDE AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED FRAMEWORK WHICH IS INCLUSIVE OF THE ASPIRATIONS

OF OUR COUNTRIES TO PARTICIPATE, IN AND BENEFIT FROM, THE CDM AND OTHER FLEXIBILITY MECHANISMS, THEREBY, GENERATING NEW AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT.

MADAME PRESIDENT, IT IS NO EXAGGERATION TO SAY THAT THE VERY FUTURE OF HUMANITY RESTS ON OUR EFFORTS TO PROTECT THE GLOBAL CLIMATE SYSTEM. LET US ENSURE THAT OUR WORK IS CROWNED WITH SUCCESS AS THIS WOULD BE TRULY IN KEEPING WITH THE NAME AND SPIRIT OF "BUENOS AIRES".

ON BEHALF OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, AND OTHER CARICOM STATES, AND HAITI, I THANK THE REPUBLIC OF ARGENTINA AND THE CITY OF BUENOS AIRES, FOR HOSTING COP4 AND FOR THE WARM HOSPITALITY EXTENDED TO ALL DELEGATIONS.

MADAME PRESIDENT, I THANK YOU.