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STATEMENT BY
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THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF
HOUSING AND THE ENVIRONMENT
GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

On The Occasion of
THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

The Sixteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (CoP-16)
CANCUN, MEXICO
December 8, 2010

Thank you Madam President.

Through you, I extend appreciation to the people and Government of Mexico for their unique gracious hospitality and excellent facilities and organization provided for the convening of this meeting. I shall also like to associate myself with the statement made by the Prime Minister of Grenada on behalf of AOSIS and the Minister of Water and Environment of Yemen on behalf of G77 and China.

Climate change is undoubtedly the single environmental issue of the 21st century, an issue that is an unprecedented threat to mankind and one which can undermine sustainable development efforts, reduction of poverty and sustained economic

growth. Trinidad and Tobago is presented with the growing challenges of developing sustainably while ensuring economic growth. We find ourselves in a unique position as an oil and gas producer with a still growing industrial sector, as well as a small island developing state possessing inherent characteristics that define our vulnerability. Mitigation and adaptation are therefore of equal concern to us.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago acknowledges that all countries that are ratified signatories to the UNFCCC have a legally binding responsibility to contribute to achieving the objective of the UNFCCC, regardless of the quantum of their greenhouse gas emissions. Trinidad and Tobago is committed to contributing to this objective. However, we reject the use of per capita emissions or any other such metric as any basis for defining the obligations of countries to reduce their emissions. We believe that equity issues need to be defined not on any notion of polluting space, which is antithetical to the issue we are striving to address, but on the rights of all countries to develop sustainably and not at the expense of others. It is therefore crucial that the multilateral process defined under the UNFCCC be maintained and strengthened.

Madam President, Honored delegates,

Trinidad and Tobago as a responsible member of the global community recognizes the need to take domestic action and we have drafted a climate change policy as well as developing strategies and approaches to address our greenhouse gas emissions. Our goal is to define an ambitious yet practically feasible and achievable greenhouse gas emissions reduction objective in the near future. At the

same time adaptation remains our major concern. Let me state unequivocally that our ability to address climate change will depend on the level of technological and financial support provided by our developed country partners.

In this regard, it is important for every single one of us that Cancun achieves a commitment to strive for emission cuts that would lead to global warming of no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. The main challenge in Cancun will be to agree on a set of decisions that can initiate concrete action, while paving the way for the conclusion of negotiations on a comprehensive legally binding agreement as soon as possible thereafter. The Cancun outcome will therefore need to achieve the following:

a) Immediate action on adaptation, reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries (REDD), technology transfer, and the provision of financial resources;

b) Agreement on meaningful mitigation actions by all countries, keeping in mind that developed countries bear the historical responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions and therefore need to provide the proactive leadership required;

c) Establish a process or processes for completing the unfinished work of the current negotiations, including the achievement of a full legally binding agreement to be negotiated after Cancun. We need to ensure that our business gets completed.

d) Positive consideration of Carbon Capture and Storage as a mitigation technology

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago recognizes that in spite of this urgency, there is no quick fix to this global problem. However at the same time we must all also realize and accept that the current imperative is absolutely clear. We have the incontrovertible responsibility as the guardians of this generation to ensure that we protect the future generations. We must fully commit now and pledge to leave our precious planet in a better state than that which we inherited. And my dear friends, the emphasis is on acting 'now'.

Our Government is fully cognizant of the political realities facing the world, and the need for putting in place as soon as possible, practical approaches within this framework, without compromising the interests of vulnerable countries such as small island developing states. This will ensure measurable progress and minimize risks.

I must point out that the countries that contribute the least to endangering the planet are among those that are affected the most. As we discuss and debate the global plan for sustainability, let us also remember vulnerability, the vulnerability of so many affected less developed and developing states.

Madame President, Dear colleagues,

Trinidad and Tobago is convinced that sufficient political will exists to achieve this end and we will be working constructively with like-minded states to ensure that Cancun does not result in a stalemate. Our own delegates have been very active in this sphere, facilitating some of the negotiations. The multilateral process needs a positive outcome in Cancun.

In closing, I refer all delegates to the statement made to this Conference by our Honourable Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Mrs. Kamla Persad Bissessar,

who is the current chair of the Commonwealth, representing 53 countries and over two billion people, a large percentage of the world's population.

She stressed:

"The outcome of COP-16 must cement the progress we have made and present us with a legally binding global agreement in South Africa in 2011. Let us commit *to being ambitious, optimistic, determined and above all, courageous*. The world's most vulnerable people cannot accept anything less"

I Thank You