Statement by the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the Second Regional Conference on Population and Development
Mexico City
October 7, 2015

Madam President
At the outset, Trinidad and Tobago joins other delegations in expressing its appreciation to the Government of Mexico for the organization of this regional conference and for its warm hospitality since our arrival.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to addressing population and development issues and to the integration of these into global processes related to development. In this regard, Trinidad and Tobago continues to strengthen implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD in alignment with our national policies and priorities. Key areas of focus pertinent to Trinidad and Tobago include: Gender Equality, Equity and Empowerment of Women; Children, Adolescents and Youth; Migration; Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health; and Poverty and Inequality.

While challenges remain, Trinidad and Tobago has achieved notable progress in the areas of education, employment, health, gender equality and the empowerment of women, and in providing the necessary social safety nets for the disadvantaged.

Madam President
Trinidad and Tobago has made significant progress in reducing extreme poverty and has surpassed the MDG for universal primary education, with citizens now benefitting from free pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education. Education, which is fundamental to poverty eradication efforts and for development, remains a priority for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. Moving beyond universal access to education at all levels, the Government will undertake a series of initiatives to improve infrastructure in school; ensure that the education provided at primary, secondary and tertiary levels prepares young
people for the challenging world of science and technology; and equip all schools to benefit from technological innovations, among others.

Madam President,
Another priority for Trinidad and Tobago is the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Trinidad and Tobago is a State Party to various international instruments which advance gender equality and the empowerment of women. National legislation has also been improved to enhance the protection of the rights of women, including to protect women and girls from all forms of violence and discrimination. Additionally, there are a number of programmes in place which seek to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in a wide range of areas, including by engaging men and boys towards this end.

Madam President,
In Trinidad and Tobago, young people between the ages of 10 and 29 comprise 32% of the population. The Government recognizes adolescent and youth as central to the development agenda. In this regard, there are numerous initiatives to educate, build resilience and channel the creativity of the youth population to ensure their development and engagement in society. Some initiatives include the establishment of Youth Friendly Spaces, Youth Councils, Skills and Entrepreneurial Training, Mentoring and Youth Health Caravans and School “Eduvans”. These programmes seek to address matters affecting our youth such as access to health care and information, adolescent pregnancy, alcoholism, unemployment, bullying and gang violence.

Approximately 13.4% of the total population in Trinidad and Tobago, Madam President, is over 60 years of age. 9% of this population is 65 years of age and over (Central Statistical Office, 2011). This percentage is expected to continue to increase well into the future. The ageing phenomenon presents both challenges and opportunities. In response to treating with the ageing population, there is a Division of Ageing under the Ministry responsible for Social Development; a National Policy on Ageing was launched in 2007; Social Protection and Health Care Services are provided with a view to reducing poverty and abuse among the
elderly; There are also Mentorship programmes, Senior Social Events and Senior Games as well as a Geriatric-Adolescent Partnership Programme. The Homes for Older Persons Act and Regulations seek to protect and to ensure that an older person’s right to liberty, life, equality of treatment and enjoyment of property are protected while living in homes for Older Persons. Areas which require continued attention, however, relate to improving the provision of geriatric care, eliminating elder abuse, and ensuring the availability of appropriate housing accommodation to meet the needs of the elderly.

Madam President,

Trinidad and Tobago ratified this year the Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities and has been undertaking a number of steps to address the needs of persons with disabilities at the national level. Some initiatives include the establishment of a Disability Affairs Unit under the Ministry responsible for Social Development; the creation of a national policy on persons with disabilities; implementation of a Disability Assistance Fund; and establishment of a National Center for Persons with Disabilities. Ongoing work is required, however, to improve the availability of reliable data on the status of persons with disabilities in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as to improve physical infrastructure to facilitate accessibility. The Government has committed to undertaking an immediate review of all programmes and services directed to persons with disabilities in order to determine existing gaps with a view to addressing these.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has also committed, Madam President, to improving the availability and delivery of health care services in Trinidad and Tobago to address a number of key issues such primary health care, maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, non-communicable diseases and sexual and reproductive health.

Trinidad and Tobago in addressing HIV/AIDS has successfully increased the proportion of the population with access to anti-retroviral drugs from 49 per cent in 2006 to 75 per cent in 2010 and reduced the number of deaths due to AIDS from 105 in 1990 to 55 in 2012 (MDG Trinidad and Tobago Report 2012). The
dignity and rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS are upheld through the National Workplace Policy on HIV/AIDS. This policy sets standards for managing HIV in the workplace and promoting structures and programmes to reduce discrimination. The country has also made strides in hosting Outreach Sessions, Counselling and free HIV Testing. Challenges remain, nonetheless, in meeting the needs of the most at risk populations, including men who have sex with men (MSM), sex workers, substance users and youth.

With regard to the issue of sexual and reproductive health in general, the Population Programme Unit of the Ministry of Health is responsible for providing a range of sexual and reproductive health care services which include fertility management in all primary health care facilities, diagnostic screening services, counseling on sexual and reproductive health as well as education and training programmes.

Trinidad and Tobago has also implemented the chronic disease assistance programme to assist with access to medicines and equipment to treat NCDs. At the national level, there are also programmes in place to address the main causes of NCDs such as tobacco use, alcohol abuse, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity.

Conclusion
In conclusion, Madam President, we wish to take this opportunity to thank all partners with whom we collaborate to achieve our objectives, in particular the United Nations Population Fund and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean which continue to provide invaluable assistance at the national and regional levels. Trinidad and Tobago joined with the international community at the United Nations last month in adopting the 2030 sustainable development agenda which is expected to guide our undertakings over the next 15 years to achieve the three pillars of sustainable development. We reaffirm our commitment to continue to work at all levels and with all partners including civil society to implement the 2030 agenda and the Programme of Action of the ICPD.
beyond 2014 with a view to achieving our development objectives in order to improve the quality of lives of all.

*I thank you*