



INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE AGAINST TERRORISM (CICTE)

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**ADDRESS BY THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO,
SENATOR DR. THE HONOURABLE LENNY SAITH,
AT THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY**

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SENATOR Dr. THE HONOURABLE LENNY SAITH,
AT THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY

- 🇹🇩 Mr. Chairman;
- 🇹🇩 The Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, Senator the Honourable Danny Montano;
- 🇹🇩 The Minister of National Security, Senator the Honourable Martin Joseph;
- 🇹🇩 Ministerial colleagues;
- 🇹🇩 Dr. Elias Bluth, Chairman of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism;
- 🇹🇩 Ambassador Luigi Einaudi, Acting Secretary General of the Organization of American States;
- 🇹🇩 Honourable Ministers and Vice-Ministers;
- 🇹🇩 Your Worship, the Mayor of Port-of-Spain, Mr. Murchison Brown;
- 🇹🇩 Distinguished Heads of Delegation and Ambassadors;
- 🇹🇩 Mr. Steven Monblatt, Secretary of CICTE;
- 🇹🇩 Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
- 🇹🇩 Members of the Media;
- 🇹🇩 Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to represent the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the Honourable Patrick Manning, at this Opening Ceremony. The Prime Minister is away from the Country on Official business, and sends his best wishes for a very successful meeting. I wish to join with previous speakers in welcoming you to this fifth Regular Session of the Inter- American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE). Trinidad and Tobago is honoured to host this event; and we extend a special welcome to all visitors to our Country for this meeting. We hope that you do have a pleasant stay with us whilst you deal with the important issues on your agenda.

The Inter-American Committee against Terrorism was born out of the need to deal with the persistent threat of terrorism in our hemisphere. It is noteworthy that the Committee came into being even before the horrendous tragedy of September 11th, 2001. This fact speaks to the insight of those who promoted the formation of CICTE.

Terrorism is a major problem facing the global community. The situation has undoubtedly become very acute in recent years, and hardly a day now passes when we do not witness the horrible destruction caused by terrorist activity in some part of the world. This underscores the importance of the effort by the Organisation of American States to engender collaboration among member countries in the fight against terrorist activity.

No country is immune from the threat of terrorism and none can effectively deal with this problem by itself. Terrorists are highly organised and they establish linkages across national borders in pursuit of their objectives. Inter-state cooperation is therefore absolutely necessary to deal with this problem.

Let us therefore enhance the exchange of information through our various relevant national authorities and through the establishment of a meaningful Inter-American data base on terrorism issues; let us enact appropriate counter-terrorism laws; let us fulfil our obligations under treaties and agreements to deal with terrorism; let us improve border cooperation and security measures; let us develop activities for training and crisis management in the event of a terrorist attack; and let us, in other words, fulfil the basic objectives of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism and do everything possible to improve our security in the face of this increasing threat.

But, let us also realise that terrorism does not exist in a vacuum. The terrorist believes he has a cause, whether it is political, social or religious. We might not always be able to persuade fanatics or the deeply misguided away from terrorist activity, but we have an inescapable obligation to ensure that, in the governance of our societies, we do nothing to provide a platform for terrorist activity. Human society is such that we might never succeed in completely avoiding the existence of disaffected groups and individuals. However, we must be unrelenting in our efforts to ensure that our societies are based on justice, the rule of law, equality of opportunity and that the respect for all fundamental human rights and freedoms. We must give terrorism no cause or opportunity for growth in our nations.

Our democracy must therefore run deep. None must feel marginalized or alienated. All voices must be heard; all views considered and the wealth of our countries must permeate all levels of our societies and so improve the lives of all our citizens. This, in the final analysis, is the best protection against the growth of violent challenges to the stability and security of our nations. Our countries must provide no breeding grounds for terrorist activity. That is the responsibility of democracy.

We must ensure that there are no recruits for terrorism in our countries. We must therefore focus on the youth. Through education and training, we must provide the opportunities for enlightenment, employment and empowerment. Poverty eradication must be high on our agenda and our communities must be so organised that they engender creativity and commitment instead of the destructive, anti-social behaviour on which terrorism breeds.

I therefore wish to suggest that, in addition to dealing with the basic objectives of the CICTE, all of which are indispensable to improving our security against terrorism, our nations must also consider the root causes of this nefarious activity and take steps to eliminate them. This would demand more meaningful hemispheric cooperation in areas other than security.

We must, therefore, acknowledge the inextricable link between security and economic development. Such recognition should, for example, promote a hemispheric arrangement for trade that is both free and fair. Poverty is a breeding ground for terrorist activity. We must recognise that the gap is widening dangerously between rich and poor among the nations of our hemisphere, thus providing the environment for destructive ideologies to take root. We must do our best to bridge this gap for we must recognise that, in this interconnected world, no country is insulated from the dangers created when hundreds of millions live in deprivation and underdevelopment. These dangers include disease, the drug trade, environmental degradation and terrorism. We must see the larger picture, if we are to be effective in devising strategies for our individual and collective security.

Trinidad and Tobago is fully prepared to work with the hemispheric community in efforts to combat terrorism. The fact that we are hosting this Fifth Regular Session is evidence of our commitment. We are also currently taking steps to ratify the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism and we now have before the national Parliament, an Anti-Terrorism Bill which, when enacted, will place this country in a position to implement those anti-terrorism Conventions and Protocols that have not yet been given effect. As further confirmation of our support for the work of the CICTE, we seconded an officer to the CICTE Secretariat in October 2003 for a one year period. We have also designated another officer to that Secretariat to cover the period when Trinidad and Tobago will be in the Chair of the Committee. We are convinced of the importance of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism and we look forward to participating in the deliberations of this Fifth Regular Session.

Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen.