

FINAL Main Leader Statement at the Ninth Summit of the Americas

By

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Prime Minister

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As the national leaders of countries and citizens in a hemisphere that has withstood the ravages of a global pandemic during the past 27 months, this 9th Summit of the Americas provides a platform of opportunity and promise that should not be missed.

The theme of this Summit: Sustainability, Resilience and Equity, appropriately defines exactly what is required if the people of the Americas are to fully benefit from the political commitments that we will make here in Los Angeles.

In the amplified voices and increased visibility of our hemisphere’s citizens at this week’s Civil Society Forum, the private sector 4th CEO Summit, and especially of our youth at the 6th Young Americas Forum, the imperative of building a future that is democratically secure, clean and green, fair and free, inclusive and innovative, resilient and renewable, smart and sustainable, is clear and cannot be ignored.

After more than two years and counting of a costly, extraordinarily global, dangerous and infectious public health emergency, and most recently during the outbreak of unjustified state-on-state war, the interdependence of our lives and livelihoods across this hemisphere and beyond, has been fully unmasked. We must all play our part if we are to rise to the occasion, one that is fully anticipated and warranted.

In Trinidad and Tobago, relatively early in the time-line of COVID-19, we charted a post-pandemic Roadmap to Recovery Plan, which we rely on today as part of our contribution to building a sustainable, resilient, and equitable future for all the people of the Americas.

Having ultimately recognized the necessity for cooperation to overcome the disastrous effects of digital, economic, health, and social inequities, highlighted even more by the COVID-19 pandemic experience, we must be reminded of the importance of multilateral cooperation to preserve our region as a Zone of Peace, even as it is threatened today by the violation of international law and the global rules-based system in Ukraine.

It is my considered view that the compounded and reinforced challenges presented to global supply chains, energy and food security, among others should sharpen our focus on the risks that we all face now and the damage that can be done to future generations if we don’t get it right. However, it is more than a cliché that the pandemic and the conflict in Europe, as well as our several hemispheric irritants, have presented us with real opportunities for wanting to do better, for building a more secure future, one to which our youth can aspire with confidence.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the Government that I lead, has shaped and is sharpening the focus of our people via our National Development Strategy 2016 – 2030, aimed at achieving increased sustainability and resilience. Economic, pandemic and security challenges make this a steep climb but we persevere in the hope of preserving the gains that we have made whilst working towards further improvement in the quality of life of our people.

Consistent with the theme of this 9th Summit of the Americas, in Trinidad and Tobago, the areas to which we have given the highest priority are:

* achieving economic recovery and sustainability for building lives and livelihoods.
* fostering citizen safety and security including disaster resilience;
* ensuring food safety and security through expanded domestic and regional production;
* protecting the vulnerable through increased emphasis on social protection;
* improving public health service delivery to curb the rise in NCDs;
* building climate and environmental resilience;
* investing in infrastructure for economic diversification to create the jobs of the future;
* accelerating digital transformation to create a smart nation;
* enhancing public investment and service delivery for improved governance; It is this people-centred National Sustainable Development policy framework and strategy that has enabled Trinidad and Tobago to join with the countries of the Americas, to contribute to the Political Commitments on Democratic Governance, Digital Transformation, Health and Resilience, a Sustainable Green Future, and Equitable Clean Energy Transition, adopted at this Summit.

By making and keeping these Political Commitments, we can and must empower our hemisphere’s civil society, private sector, women, youth, and other vulnerable groups that have historically been marginalized and discriminated against, including Persons of African Descent and Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, to achieve their aspirations for a Sustainable, Resilient and Equitable Future.

Mr. President, Excellencies, I firmly believe that the greatest opportunity that this Summit provides for delivering on these political commitments to our citizens, is the opportunity to rebuild trust, first in democracy, then among democracies, and ultimately within democracies, in our Hemisphere of countries with diverse histories, economies, polities and societies.

Whilst we can report that The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is a strong and stable democracy we have not been without our own challenges from time to time. We who have consistently been included in each of the Nine Summits of the Americas, held since 1994, are the smallest country in this hemisphere to have hosted the Summit of Americas, the 5th Summit in 2009. We know that small does not mean insignificant. We know that the practice of democracy is neither a cloistered virtue nor an automatic one shape fits all. We say that if we are all to end up in that same safe place the journey must not be truncated and we may have to help some of our brothers and sisters along the way but we must never abandon them.

We are convinced that our inclusion in this process and the respect and regard that have been accorded to our sovereign equality, have contributed meaningfully to our strength and stability as a democracy and a beautiful twin-island Republic. What we wish for ourselves, we wish for others, and as a proud member of the Caribbean Community, we hope that such respect and regard would be afforded to all states within our hemisphere, including Cuba and Venezuela. The path of exclusion and sanctions has not been effective in the past and has brought us no closer to the goal of an Americas which is equitable for the ordinary citizens of our hemisphere no matter where they live. We cannot accept without worry what is happening in Haiti as a normal existence for the population there. We who have put man on the moon and created the internet , we should be able to bring some relief to Haitian lives, within these Americas.

This week we celebrate, for the 9th occasion within the framework of the Summit of the Americas Process, our collective commitment to multilateral cooperation as a necessary platform for the preservation of peace, the promotion of productivity, and the pursuit of prosperity in the Americas.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago reiterates our commitment to hemispheric cooperation, and I express my deepest appreciation to the President and People of the United States for the hospitality and courtesies extended to our Delegation at this 9th Summit of the Americas. We worked hard to give this Summit in Los Angeles, the very best chance of success, and President Biden, I assure you that the Government and People of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago stand in full commitment with you and all partners in the family of the Americas to ‘Build a Sustainable, Resilient and Equitable Future’, for all our people.

Thank you and May God continue to Bless us all.