

**SENATE***Tuesday, November 24, 2015*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, I wish to advise that the President of the Senate, Sen. The Hon. Christine Kangaloo is out of the country. I have granted leave of absence to the Senator, the hon. Dennis Moses who is also out of the country.

**SENATORS' APPOINTMENT**

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, I have received the following correspondence from His Excellency the President, Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona, S.C., O.R.T.T.:

“THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By His Excellency ANTHONY THOMAS  
AQUINAS CARMONA, O.R.T.T., S.C.,  
President and Commander-in-Chief of the  
Armed Forces of the Republic of Trinidad and  
Tobago.

/s/ Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T. S.C.

President.

TO: ALISHA ROMANO

WHEREAS Senator Christine Kangaloo is incapable of performing her duties as a Senator by reason of her absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

**UNREVISED**

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ANTHONY THOMAS AQUINAS CARMONA, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44(1) (a) and section 44(4)(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, Alisha Romano, to be temporarily a member of the Senate, with effect from 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2015 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Kangaloo.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the  
President of the Republic of Trinidad  
and Tobago at the Office of the  
President, St. Ann's, this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of  
November, 2015."

"THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND  
TOBAGO

By His Excellency ANTHONY THOMAS  
AQUINAS CARMONA, O.R.T.T., S.C.,  
President and Commander-in-Chief of the  
Armed Forces of the Republic of Trinidad and  
Tobago.

/s/ Anthony Thomas Aquinas Carmona O.R.T.T. S.C.

President.

TO: ROHAN SINANAN

WHEREAS Senator Dennis Moses is incapable of performing his duties as a Senator by reason of his absence from Trinidad and Tobago:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ANTHONY THOMAS AQUINAS CARMONA, President as aforesaid, in exercise of the power vested in me by section 44(1)(a) and section 44(4)(a) of the Constitution of the

**UNREVISED**

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, do hereby appoint you, ROHAN SINANAN, to be temporarily a member of the Senate with effect from 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2015 and continuing during the absence from Trinidad and Tobago of the said Senator Moses.

Given under my Hand and the Seal of the  
President of the Republic of Trinidad  
and Tobago at the Office of the  
President, St. Ann's, this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of  
November, 2015.”

### **OATH OF ALLEGIANCE**

*Senators Alisha Romano and Rohan Sinanan took and subscribed the Oath of Allegiance as required by law.*

### **PAPERS LAID**

1. Annual Report of the Registration Recognition and Certification Board for the year ended December 31, 2011. [*The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (Sen. The Hon. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus)*]
2. Annual Report of the Registration Recognition and Certification Board for the year ended December 31, 2012. [*Sen. The Hon. J. Baptiste-Primus*]
3. Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training for the period October 2013 to September 2014. [*The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan)*]
4. Report of the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago on the Statement of Recovery of Expenses of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs for the year ended December 31, 2014. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]

5. Proceeds of Crime (Prescribed Forms) (Amendment) Regulations, 2015  
[*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
6. Annual Administrative Report of the Betting Levy Board for the period July 01, 2012 to June 30, 2013. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
7. Civil Aviation [(No. 18) State Aircraft Registration and Markings] Regulations, 2015. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]
8. Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation (Vesting) (Amendment to the First Schedule) (No. 3) Order, 2015. [*Sen. The Hon. F. Khan*]

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

### Industrial Relations Act (Recognition of Domestic Workers)

4. **Sen. Wade Mark** asked the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development:

Could the Minister state what measures are being instituted by the Government to recognize domestic workers as employees, within the meaning of the Industrial Relations Act?

**The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (Sen. The Hon. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus):** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. In response to the hon. Senator's question regarding recognition of domestic workers as employees within the meaning of the Industrial Relations Act, I am pleased to inform that the Industrial Relations Advisory Committee established under section 80 of the Industrial Relations Act, Chap. 88:01, in its advisory report dated June 2013, recommended that the definition of the term "worker" under the IRA be defined broadly and should include all persons who work under an employment relationship, that is, under contract. The committee recommended, in particular,

that domestic workers should no longer be denied the protection and right to representation given to other workers under the current Industrial Relations Act.

Under the previous administration, a consultant was hired by the Ministry to examine the industrial relations sector and to develop a policy for the amendment of the current IRA. This policy formed the basis of the draft Industrial Relations (Amdt.) Bill, 2015, which was introduced in the House of Representatives on May 01, 2015.

The Industrial Relations (Amdt.) Bill, 2015, by the insertion of a new Part IIIA, sought to treat with the issue of domestic workers by allowing regulations to be made in relation to matters concerning persons employed by a householder in any capacity of a domestic nature, including that of a chauffeur, gardener or handyman in, or about a private dwelling house, within the definition of “worker” under the IRA.

In so doing, it would be ensured that domestic employees are granted protection under the IRA. Mr. Vice-President, this Bill lapsed on June 17, 2015 after its second reading. Many concerns were expressed about the lack of consultation in the development of this Bill by not only the employers, but by the entire trade union movement.

This Government has stated its commitment to undertake a comprehensive review of the Industrial Relations Act in consultation with the tripartite partners to obtain recommendations to encourage good industrial relations practices in Trinidad and Tobago. Such recommendations will include proposals in relation to domestic workers.

**Sen. Mark:** Mr. Vice-President, could the hon. Minister indicate to this House whether she has assigned herself or the committee, a time frame for reviewing on a comprehensive basis the Industrial Relations Act?

**Sen. The Hon. J. Baptiste-Primus:** Mr. Vice-President, the establishment of a time frame for the review of this entire piece of legislation is a bit difficult at this point in time, but I wish to assure this honourable House that a stakeholders' conference will be held within the first quarter of 2016, at which time a time frame in terms of identification of those aspects of the IRA and how we will roll down those amendments. It will be done in consultation with all the partners involved. So, perhaps in 2016 after that stakeholders' conference, I will be in a much better position to respond in detail to the request of the hon. Senator.

**Registration Recognition and Certification Board  
 (Speedier Process for Applications)**

**6. Sen. Wade Mark** asked the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development:

- A. Is the Minister aware that applications for recognition at the Registration Recognition and Certification Board can take as much as three (3) years to process?
- B. If the Minister is so aware, could the Minister indicate what measures, if any, she intends to take to urgently rectify this anomaly?

**The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (Sen. The Hon. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus):** Mr. Vice-President, the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development is aware that applications for recognition at the Registration Recognition and Certification Board can take a long period of time to process and the hon. Senator is well aware of how long such a process takes.

**1.45 p.m.**

As a consequence, Government has stated its intention to simplify the recognition process for trade unions in our policy document.

Further to enquiries as to reasons for delays in this process, some of the

contributing factors identified include the following:

- Reluctance by parties and, in some cases, outright refusal to submit relevant information in a timely manner;
- Tardiness by parties to attend scheduled meetings; and
- Delays in the appointments of members to the Registration Recognition and Certification Board. For example, the term of the previous board ended on January 09, 2014; however, the current board was appointed on February 22, 2015.

The board, as well as the secretariat, is presently making every effort to address this situation.

Mr. Vice-President, it is recognized that urgent action is required to significantly improve the timeliness to the recognition process. As a matter of fact, just yesterday I met with one aspect, one arm of the labour movement, the Joint Trade Union Movement, and they were given the undertaking that it is this Government's intention to reduce the process to an extent that within six months of a trade union applying for recognition, such recognition will be granted.

Mr. Vice-President, this Government intends to engage the tripartite partners in discussion on this matter, as part of the process of reviewing the Industrial Relations Act, and implement appropriate measures. Some of the measures which are being considered at this time include:

- Utilization of the conciliatory sessions to bring closure to outstanding matters;
- Training of examiners;
- Review of the structure and staffing of the secretariat; and
- Hosting of education sessions with employers, trade unions and other

stakeholders.

**Sen. Mark:** Could the hon. Minister indicate to this House whether the paucity of staff at the level of the recognition board may be a contributing factor to the delays that trade unions experience in gaining recognition when they submit their applications?

**Sen. The Hon. J. Baptiste-Primus:** Mr. Vice-President, I will not say that that is a mitigating factor but, indeed, it is one of the reasons and we will take steps to remedy the situation. As a matter of fact, the issue of contract labour over the widespread use in the public service, even that is engaging our attention at the moment.

**Sen. Dr. Mahabir:** Mr. Vice-President, can I have a supplemental?

**Mr. Vice-President:** Yes, go ahead.

**Sen. Dr. Mahabir:** Thank you. A further supplemental. Thank you very much. Hon. Minister, do you have the information with respect to the time it takes Caricom partners—such as Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana, et cetera—on their own recognition and certification process with respect to the registration of trade unions and does it compare favourably or unfavourably with our own?

**Sen. The Hon. J. Baptiste-Primus:** Mr. Vice-President, I can assure the hon. Senator, at our next sitting, that I will have such comparative analysis available to him.

**Industrial Relations Act and  
 Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act  
 (New or Revised Legislation for)**

7. **Sen. Wade Mark** asked the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development:



Could the Minister state whether the Government intends to bring the legislation concerning a comprehensive revised Industrial Relations Act, as well as, a new or revised Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act?

**The Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development (Sen. The Hon. Jennifer Baptiste-Primus):** Mr. Vice-President, in response to the question raised by the hon. Member, I wish to advise, as stated in Government's policy document, the Government is committed to encouraging proper industrial relations practices and effective democratic trade unionism in Trinidad and Tobago. To achieve this objective, the Government will be undertaking a comprehensive and immediate review of all labour legislation, including the Industrial Relations Act, Chap. 88:01 and the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, Chap. 88:13.

In reviewing and modernizing labour legislation in Trinidad and Tobago, the Government will engage in dialogue and regular consultation with the tripartite partners and other stakeholders so as to obtain their input and feedback into the process.

And lastly, the hon. Prime Minister, before he left on his official visit to Malta, signalled the intention that upon his return, the tripartite body will be appointed so the social dialogue process will begin in earnest. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Mark:** Mr. Vice-President, the hon. Minister, given the need to modernize the labour market and to bring about greater levels of efficiency and productivity, the critical importance of these measures that the hon. Minister has outlined, quite important, could the hon. Minister indicate whether the Government, through her, has looked at a possible period of time when most of the major pieces of legislation that will bring about a modernization of our labour market would become effected and operationalized in Trinidad and Tobago?

**Sen. The Hon. J. Baptiste-Primus:** Mr. Vice-President, the question the hon.

Member posed is a rather difficult one to answer at the moment. As I indicated to him earlier, this is not a process of the Government driving this process, this is a tripartite process at which all partners will sit together, we will engage in social dialogue, we will identify the factors, and together, we will set the timetable.

As a matter of fact, one of our stakeholders is the International Labour Organization, and yesterday afternoon, the Permanent Secretary, other senior officers of the Ministry and myself met in a lengthy discussion, for the third time, with the International Labour Organization's Director in terms of—the discussion was wide-ranging, but we have a focus in terms of ensuring that we re-establish a labour market information unit, because most times, we make decisions but the decisions are not data-driven. At the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, we want to correct that situation so that any piece of legislation that we bring before this House or it goes to the other House, will be data-driven information. [*Desk thumping*]

### **UNITED NATIONS AGENDA 2030 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* Agenda 2030 and attendant Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations on 25 September 2015 will drive global efforts to end poverty and place the planet on a sustainable course over the next fifteen years;

*And whereas* the SDGs constitute an interlinked framework fusing together economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, including provisions to mobilize the resources required to support implementation;

*And whereas* the Government of Trinidad and Tobago as a member of the United Nations has committed to this new global agenda on behalf of our people;

*And whereas* the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago will need to translate the global SDGs into a national plan for sustainable development with its own country-specific goals and time bound targets;

*And whereas* the Declaration of the 4th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament adopted on 2 September 2015 provides further guidance to parliaments on the implementation of the new global agenda;

*Be it resolved* that the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago:

1. take stock of Agenda 2030 and attendant Sustainable Development Goals as well as the Declaration of the World Speakers Conference as the main reference point on all policies for sustainable development;
2. commit to help implement this new framework through all acts of legislation, including the budget; and
3. request that the Government table a report on the implementation of the national strategy for the SDGs for a thorough review by Parliament.

Mr. Vice-President, it is my honour to present this very important Motion to this honourable Senate today. We live in difficult times or perhaps, more accurately, and as Charles Dickens wrote famously, the best of times and the worst of times, for not everyone on the planet, and here in our country, sees things the same way. Too many people, Mr. Vice-President, are shielded from reality but reality always intrudes eventually and people will ask: why did we not see this coming? Where were our leaders? Around the world, the threat of war and

instability is as great as ever. Many countries are governed by autocratic regimes that care little for the welfare of their own people. Economic and social inequalities continue to be on the rise eroding the very social contract that binds people together.

Mr. Vice-President, over two billion people live in abject poverty in the world today and the whole of humanity, of 7.2 billion people, soon to be nine billion by 2015, is living well beyond the carrying capacities of the Earth. People everywhere are growing restless. In too many places, they feel they do not really have a say in the decisions that concern them. In more affluent societies, the so-called middle class appears to be disappearing. And even right here in Trinidad and Tobago, the Government recently announced a policy, a new housing policy in which the qualifying ceiling will now be increased—be reduced, I should say, from \$45,000 to \$25,000, denying middle-class citizens in the process access to subsidize state housing.

Our economic model predicated on expanding material growth demands ever more extraction of resources and exploitation of the environment. This environmental degradation will eventually undermine the very foundation of our economy. Climate change and a host of other environmental crises are upon us demanding urgent action. We need to save the planet to save ourselves and we need social justice to prevent conflict and strengthen democracy everywhere. Changing the course we are on is not an option, it is an imperative. Time is running out. Experts tell us that if we continue to demand so much of Planet Earth, as we do today, four planets will be required to provide for people worldwide just in a few decades.

Mr. Vice-President, this is no longer a matter of development in the traditional sense which concerned the so-called developing countries. It is a matter

of sustainable development for the entire world, from the more affluent to the poorest among us. This is why, after a long gestation, Agenda 2030 was born at the United Nations out of a major summit of Heads of State and Governments in September of 2015. Parliaments like ours contributed to this new agenda through the Inter-Parliamentary Union which is the world organization of Parliaments of which this Senate and this Parliament is a proud member.

To bring this global agenda closer to the parliamentary community, the Inter-Parliamentary Union convened a World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, the fourth in a series, just a couple of weeks before the United Nations Summit in New York. I had the privilege at that time to represent the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at this conference. The resolution before us today captures the spirit and, in some parts, the letter of these important commitments.

Let me elaborate a bit on the background that led to it. Agenda 2030, the Speaker's declaration and ultimately the evolving relationship between Parliaments and the United Nations as a principal organ of global governance. The core of Agenda 2030 consists of 17 goals, what is called the Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets. The Sustainable Development Goals constitute one of the most ambitious international agreements since the birth of the United Nations 70 years ago. They come with a timeline of 15 years, that is until 2030, to get the job done. This timeline may sound a bit arbitrary but it is really meant to convey the signal that, as I said, time is of the essence.

The Sustainable Development Goals aim at two fundamental objectives: to eradicate poverty in all its forms and everywhere, and to reset the planet on a sustainable course. The 17 goals are designed to converge toward these two overarching objectives. They talk about: ending hunger; ensuring education for

all; providing universal health care; achieving true gender equality; creating jobs; making consumption and production sustainable; expanding renewable energy and, of course, reversing climate change and reducing inequalities in our respective societies globally.

The last goal, number 17, is about the money. It gives governments guidance as to how they can secure the implementation of the goals by mobilizing a host of financial and non-financial resources. In fact, the cost of the Sustainable Development Goals is estimated in the order of several trillions of dollars per year. Several of the goals build on previous international commitments but a few are new and breathtaking in scope. Take the goal of inequality, for example, there has never been a goal agreed at the global level before on trying to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich, not only within countries but between nations.

Another major novelty is goal number 16 and I quote:

“Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”

Although none of these ideas is new, of course, what is new is that they have been brought together into a single goal that all countries are asked to bring fruition by a given deadline of 2030. All three pillars of sustainable development: the social, the economic and environmental pillars are woven into this new framework; gender equality and women empowerment cut across many of the goals.

Mr. Vice-President, while I will quickly concede that the SDGs are not perfect, there is no doubt in my mind that they point us in the right direction. Some of us in this House may wonder why a United Nations agenda, “cooked up” by Governments in New York, should matter to us in this Parliament in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. If you recognize that the world is in a state of

crisis and that our future prosperity depends on collective action, then we will see how the Sustainable Development Goals matter to all of us.

The Sustainable Development Goals do not pretend to have the force of International Law. They are not legally binding, but they do constitute a morally binding, voluntary agreement that called on each country to make a contribution to the world's problem. So whilst it is not legally binding, it is morally binding. The goals simply tell us where we, as a global community, need to be 15 years from today's date. They do not tell us how we can get there; that is for us in Trinidad and Tobago to decide. This is a matter of policy choices that each country will need to make in full respect of its own national sovereignty.

National ownership of the goals will be critical to their success. Unless each country makes them their own in their own context and with support from the people, they will not succeed. Our country is part of the international community, and our Government has signed up to these Sustainable Development Goals. Our Minister of Foreign Affairs was at the United Nations on September 25 and he signed up to these goals on behalf of the nation state of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

So, Mr. Vice-President, it follows that we as a Parliament must pay attention to these goals, which takes me to the Declaration of the World Conference of Speakers of Parliament I mentioned earlier. With this declaration, the Speakers of the world have committed their own Parliaments to follow the Sustainable Development Goals closely. The Inter-Parliamentary Union organized several consultations with parliaments to provide input into the United Nations agenda, and I am proud to say that many of the concerns of the Speakers of the world are reflected in Agenda 2030.

This is particularly evident in goal number 16, which is the so-called

governance goal, which asked countries to promote the rule of law, combat corruption and ensure responsive, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. These are all concerns of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and you can find them reflected in the declaration of Speakers. The idea underpinning these concerns is quite simple but it strikes at the very crux of the matter. We need to reform politics so that decisions are made for the common good and not to suit the whims and fancies of particular interests. May I repeat this, Mr. Vice-President? We need to reform politics so that decisions are made for the common good and not to suit the whims and fancies of particular interests.

**2.15 p.m.**

We need to improve participation and representation of all people in the political process and reform political systems around the world. We need a new consensus-based politics, where the point is not to win necessarily the next election, but to win the battle of ideas for a new society that is just, fair and even, as far as possible. As a Parliament we will have a crucial role in the implementation of this ambitious, international agenda, this is stated in the United Nations document. It says which recalls, and I quote:

“...the essential role of...Parliaments...through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments.”

As I said earlier, Mr. Vice-President, this is something that the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, under the pairing that the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, has agreed to. So our first job as an oversight body—that is why I have brought this Motion to this Parliament, because we have a role to play in ensuring that these 17 Sustainable Goals are implemented, and



effected over the next 15 years.

So we have to ask the Government to come forward and to give us a full briefing on this new agenda. The Government has a responsibility to come forward, and give not only the Parliament, Mr. Vice-President, but the nation of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and its people, a full briefing on this 2015 agenda; they have that duty. The Government has the duty to submit a national plan to ensure that these goals are realized. Does the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, as we speak, have a national plan, Mr. Vice-President?

**Sen. Khan:** Yes we do.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Okay. [*Laughter*] We look forward to having you table that national plan in this Parliament and this House, because we are yet to see a national plan of your Government thus far. A manifesto is not a national plan, you know? I want to tell you that. [*Laughter*] So coming and drop a manifesto here and saying that is policy; that is not a plan eh. Okay.

**Sen. Khan:** That is still to come.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Okay. Well, that is still to come.

So Mr. Vice-President, the Government has to tell us about its national plan. How is the Government going to translate this global commitment that it has undertaken into a set of targets that apply to our own country? These are matters that are of a very serious nature, and the Government of this country needs to tell the country and this Parliament how it intends to achieve those objectives.

We need a conversation virtually about this, and a space where it can take place. And taking a cue from the Speaker's Declaration of the IPU, this Motion makes it clear that the place for this conversation is right here in the Parliament. That is why we have brought this Motion to this Parliament, so we can begin the conversation with the Government on this very important matter.

Most importantly, Mr. Vice-President, the Motion invites us to put our own House of Parliament in order. As I said, the SDGs are an integrated agenda that covers many policy areas in a cross cutting way. We cannot tackle each goal in isolation from the others. We must avoid undoing with one hand what with we do with the other. Mr. Vice-President, this will require that we review our own working methods to make sure that they promote policy coherence across the board.

As a party to this agreement, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago will be asked periodically to report to the United Nations as the global hub for monitoring progress on the goals. And, Mr. Vice-President, you know, this brings me immediately to the matter of what is called the Millennium Development Goals. Because it was against the background or the backdrop of the Millennium Development Goals which came into existence—I think it was in 1990, and it came to an end—well, it is coming to an end this year, 2015, where again, the world community got together and they set what is called the Millennium Development Agenda in the year 1990, and it ends at the end of this year, December 2015; 25 years.

You know what those Millennium Development Goals that we signed on to were?—and many administrations were involved: the NAR was part of that; the PNM administration under Patrick Manning was part of that. Basdeo Panday's administration was part of that arrangement as well. Then the PNM came back and then the UNC in a partnership also returned. So it was not the effort or the efforts of one political administration, seeking to put into effect the Millennium Development Agenda. It was across the board; cross cutting.

What were those Millennium Development Goals that the UN set for us and we signed on to? The first goal was to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The

second goal was to achieve universal primary education. The third goal was to promote gender equality and empower women. The fourth was to reduce child mortality. The fifth, improve maternal health. The sixth, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Seven, to ensure environmental sustainability; and finally, to develop a global partnership for development. These were the eight Millennium Development Goals that we agreed to at the United Nations, and we set about seeking to effect and implement over the last 25 years.

I must say as we reflect on the collective efforts of the people and the various administrations over the last 25 years, I would like to say that Trinidad and Tobago did reasonably well in achieving several of the Millennium Development Goals [*Desk thumping*] during that period under review.

For example, in the area of poverty, we were able to reduce the proportion of people living below the poverty line, Mr. Vice-President, who were realizing a US \$1 per day from 24 per cent to 14.8 per cent. We were able to achieve that as a nation, and that is something that we must be proud of. As a collective, we were able to deal with extreme poverty which has almost been eradicated in this country. It is now about 1.2 per cent of the population as we speak. We were able, as a collective to achieve universal, not only primary school as we have it here—primary education as a part of the millennium goal. We were able to achieve universal secondary education.

And not only that, we were one of the few countries that Ban Ki-moon praised as one of the few countries in the world, small Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] was praised by Ban Ki-moon just a few months ago in Barbados, as achieving universal early childhood education in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Trinidad and Tobago was able to achieve as a small country universal early childhood education, where a toddler at the age of two can

go to an early childhood education centre. If your parents can afford more, if your parents are rich, and do not want to associate with this kind of exposure, they can send their child or their toddler to another school. But any ordinary parent can now send his or her toddler at the age of two years to an early childhood education centre free at the expense of the taxpayers of this country; Trinidad and Tobago. That is something that we have to be proud of. We achieved that. That is a collective achievement in this country.

We not only realized that, we realized tertiary level participation. It was 15 per cent in 2004. Today, it is over 65 per cent.

**Sen. Gopee-Scoon:** “You not serious.”

**Sen. W. Mark:** I am telling you participation rate at the University of the West Indies—[*Interruption*]

**Sen. Gopee-Scoon:** We are not—[*Interruption*]

**Sen. W. Mark:** No, no, no. Well, you could speak at the appropriate time. Do not interrupt me when I am on my legs. Do not do that. That is very unkind of you. [*Laughter*]

So, Mr. Vice-President, this is something that we should all be proud of, but you see this partisan politics, “cyar deal with de reality”. I am saying collectively we have achieved this. I am hearing: “No, we have not achieved that”. I think the lady is a stranger. She is not a citizen of the Republic. We should feel proud that we have collectively achieved that. “Yuh understand?” [*Desk thumping*]

And she should—I am going to tell her about something, the hon. Minister that is my good friend, from Point Fortin, former Point Fortin Member of Parliament, I should say, before she joined me here. [*Laughter*] We also achieved gender parity. Mr. Vice-President, gender parity in the primary and secondary levels enrolment, and women have surpassed men at the tertiary level in terms of

participation.

**2.30 p.m.**

So, Mr. Vice-President, what I am saying is that we as a nation should be very proud of the achievements that we have made and we have realized as a collective in Trinidad and Tobago.

So I want to conclude because I do not have to take my entire time. I want to deal in concluding, Mr. Vice-President, and indicate that a new body called the High Level Political Forum has been set up at the United Nations to keep track of progress and spur further action at the global level. It is our job as a Parliament to make sure Trinidad and Tobago keeps its promise in front of the international community by participating actively in this new forum.

Ideally, we should ask to review whatever report this Parliament would be asking and seeking to assist in reviewing whatever report the Government submits to this forum, and to seek to join the Government's delegation whenever possible. The Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Vice-President, as a very important institution in implementing these Sustainable Development Goals should be part of any delegation going to the United Nations on this question about Agenda 2030. I want to emphasize that should be a matter that ought to be taken on board.

The IPU which is our organization—because we are a member of the IPU—is working to develop a close relationship with the United Nations. This is part of a broad vision to fill the gap between global decision-making and the people that are at the receiving end of it.

Mr. Vice-President, the United Nations Charter starts with the words “We the peoples...” In 1945 when the UN was established, globalization as we know it today was in its infancy. As globalization evolved the institutions of global governance that were created in the post-war have struggled to keep up. As a

result, all international agreements the Sustainable Development Goals included must include the voice of the people through their elected representatives from the start and in the follow-up. Mr. Vice-President, how many more minutes do I have?

**Mr. Vice-President:** You have four minutes.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Four minutes. May I close by quoting the Preamble to the document that was approved by the United Nations General Assembly, and I think it is important to put on record the Preamble and I quote. It is under the broad rubric, “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” and I quote:

“This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. We recognise that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan. We are resolved to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet. We are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets which we are announcing today demonstrate the scale and ambition of this new universal Agenda. They seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals and complete what”—they—“did not achieve. They seek to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three

dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental.

The Goals and targets will stimulate action over the next fifteen years in areas of critical importance for humanity and the planet.”

Mr. Vice-President, with this background, and in a nutshell, the mission of the United Nations and our involvement is clear. We need to pay attention and take action in implementing the 2030 Agenda. I hope the Government, the Independent and our Parliament will join us and will join the people of the world in supporting this Motion as we seek, Mr. Vice-President, to place on the agenda of Trinidad and Tobago this very important transformative agenda which will see a revolutionary reform of the world’s stage and order which will realize peace, bread, justice and progress for all of the peoples of our globe. I beg to move and I thank you, Mr. Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

*Seconded by Sen. Wayne Sturge.*

*Question proposed.*

**The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan):** Mr. Vice-President, it is an honour and privilege for me to join this debate, and putting partisan politics aside I want to go on the record as congratulating the Leader of Opposition Business in the Senate for bringing forward this Motion [*Desk thumping*] because it is of a developmental nature, it transcends partisan politics and it is extremely timely as we move into this new phase of governance, not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but in the entire world. This is the type of topic I would like to see debated more in this Upper House as we continue this session. Mr. Vice-President, I want to give the assurance that the Parliament will have a role to play in this 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, because at the end of the day the Government is accountable to the Parliament and

the Parliament is accountable to the people.

I also want to go on record as saying that I see the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament was held August 31 to September 02, so Sen. Wade Mark in officiating probably his last official duty as Speaker of the House, it was time well spent Sen. Mark.

But, Mr. Vice-President, the Sustainable Development Goals, I think the mover of the Motion should have gone on record and outline them for the purposes of the parliamentary record. So I just want to start my discourse in stating that the 2030 Agenda, the final document was adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit, September 25 to 27, 2015 in New York, United States. The title of the agenda is “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are as follows:

“Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable



industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”—very important.

“Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”

If planet earth and global society attain these 17 goals, we would have produced the ultimate Utopia, but the United Nations have their work to do and they set the agenda. Obviously a lot of these—I do not want to put a negative spin on it too early—obviously everybody cannot attain all these things, but it is a target and I think all societies on this planet should try to achieve it in some form or fashion.

Mr. Vice-President, most important, and I would just quote one more piece from this document. There are four domains for the successful organization of the Sustainable Development Goals, and I want this Parliament to pay close attention. The four domains are, domain one, the accomplishment of the SDGs over 15 years should include:

“...intermediate objectives and milestones with clear dates.”

Okay? It is a 15-year plan, but there will be milestones every two, three, four, five years as the case may be with clear milestones and clear dates in which to achieve these milestones.

**2.45 p.m.**

Secondly—the former administration has to take some blame here:

“...the lifeblood of the...SDGs”

—the lifeblood “eh”, listen to the language of the UN:

“...the lifeblood of the...SDGs should be data that are accurate, timely, and available to managers, policy makers, and the public.”

I do not want to bemoan what happened to the Central Statistical Office; we have a plan in place to redeem that travesty, but having said that, with all the talk, the lifeblood of the SDG is data that is accurate, timely, and available to managers, policy makers and the public.

The third domain is that the private sector should be critically engaged from the very start. Governments tend to get carried away in these international fora and forget that the private sector exists. In a lot of respect the private sector is even more important in implementing some of these goals than governments themselves, so from very early in the game we have to engage the private sector. Fourthly:

“...the success of the SDGs will need societies worldwide to invest adequately in their success.”

Obviously, that is a given.

So, Mr. Vice-President, these are the Sustainable Development Goals. It is a 15-year plan, and while Sen. Mark said the manifesto is not a plan, when I read this manifesto and when I read what the Sustainable Development Goals want to attain,

I think there is some synchronization of both documents. [*Desk thumping*] This, basically, will be the road map that we would use, and this is really a précis of another document that will be tabled shortly called Vision 2030, which is a redone of Vision 2020, which is remodelled to suit the changing circumstances of the world and of Trinidad and Tobago. So we are here stating that—I look at every aspect: water, renewable energy, agriculture, food security, most of these issues that are raised on the SDGs are included in this manifesto. And just for the purposes of Sen. Mark saying we do not have a plan; we have a plan and the plan is for 15 years, and we hope to stay in Government for 15 years. [*Desk thumping*]

But, Mr. Vice-President, I just want to go through certain aspects of what is attainable and put some flesh, as it were, on some of the 17 development goals, where we are as a country and what needs to be done. Again, just to quote what Sen. Mark said, and he said that rightfully; I have the same document he was reading from that stated what we had attained in the reduction of poverty in terms of reduction of extreme hunger, attaining primary and secondary education for all, and this document says some of the highlights of this country's achievement over the last 14 years. So it was really a cross-political issue, and a lot of various political parties were involved in the accomplishment of these goals.

Mr. Vice-President, to put this in context, I just want to deal briefly with poverty eradication and zero hunger, elimination of hunger in the world. Sen. Clarence Rambharat will deal with food production later down in the debate, or whensoever the debate continues, but extreme poverty and extreme hunger are something that has plagued this planet for centuries. I want to go back—for those of you who studied some form of economics, I know, Sen. Dhanayshar—there was a guy called Malthus, and Malthusian theory of population growth, and what Malthus said is that food production increased by arithmetic progression and

population rise exponentially, and some way along the line the world would not have enough resources to feed its people.

I just want to quote from Malthus, and he was at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century where technology was not as advanced as it is now, and I just want to quote briefly, and I quote, Mr. Vice-President:

“Famine seems to be the last, the most dreadful resource of nature. The power of population is so superior to the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man, that premature death must in some shape or other visit the human race.”

He goes on to predict catastrophe because it was the theory at the time that food production cannot keep pace with population growth, and then there became something called neo-Malthusian theory, and it is largely based on two principles: one, after World War II, mechanized agriculture produced a dramatic increase in productivity in agriculture, and then there was something called the Green Revolution, which literally revolutionized agriculture in terms of crop yields and different types of genetics in plants that were great yields in wheat, corn and soya, and what have you. Then there was something called—in the early 21st Century many technologically developed countries had passed through, what they call, the demographic transition, and that shows where:

“...a complex social development encompassing a drop in total fertility rates in response to lower infant mortality, increased urbanization, and a wider availability of effective birth control, causing the demographic-economic paradox.

On the assumption that the demographic transition is now spreading from the developed countries to less developed countries”—and this is a critical statement here—“the United Nations Population Fund estimates that human

population may peak in the late 21st century rather than continue to grow until it has exhausted available resources.”

So there is some hope on the horizon in getting food production and population growth to synchronize so that the world can feed itself.

I just want to go on record as saying, Mr. Vice-President, that it is my humble opinion that Planet Earth cannot sustain six billion people at the level of the lifestyle of the developed countries. It is just physically impossible. Okay. So as good as the United Nations wants to try some way along the line, we have to deal with population growth, and, again, I want to blame the economists on this count. Hear what has happened, there was a time when a large population was a hindrance to a society, so in the 1940s and the 1950s, who were the poorest countries in the world? The countries that had the largest population, India and China, regular farming, and they cannot keep pace with feeding their own people, okay, and then something happened along the way and a large population was transformed into a large market, and the large market now drives the economy.

So that in a spin, in a diametrically opposed spin, somehow or the other, it seems as though the economic models of the world are telling you that the larger population you have is the better your chances of economic growth. To me something is inherently inconsistent with that, but I am no economic expert, I am just putting a view that the 1.5 billion people in China and the one billion people in India, something about that is unsustainable. Okay. And if countries want to model their development according to those two countries, I think they should rethink their position. That is all I have to say on poverty eradication, but food production has increased significantly in the world. We have been reducing chronic hunger and adverse poverty, and in Trinidad and Tobago we have our own plan here for food self-sufficiency and food independence, and when the Minister

of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries takes the floor later on he will articulate some of those plans.

Quality education, as Sen. Mark said already, all Governments have contributed in some form or fashion, but we have a system here now with universal preschool education, universal primary school education, universal secondary education, and a significant percentage of free tertiary education. The challenges we face with tertiary education, however, is that the absorptive capacity of the economy to provide meaningful jobs to the large volume of tertiary graduates we are putting forward, it continues to be a challenge to the last government and to this Government.

Ladies and gentlemen, Members, Mr. Vice-President, I want to go on record as saying, what has happened in this case is that we are seeing a growing level of underemployment in Trinidad and Tobago. And, again, I want to go on the record as saying, in a very real sense, underemployment is worse than unemployment. Underemployment, in my view, is worse than unemployment. So, there are serious challenges now, we have to synchronize our GATE Programme. We have to synchronize our tertiary educational facilities to bring out graduates that the economy can absorb with meaningful employment and find alternative ways of educating people who cannot fit into the economic landscape to get meaningful jobs. Again, that is a challenge that faces the educational system.

On gender equality and empowerment of all women, we have excelled in that as a nation probably more than most people. Some of the documents I researched here say that Trinidad—that was in pre-2015—had the honour of having the first female Prime Minister; I will say no more on that. However, girls have continued to outperform boys. You see it in the SEA top 100; it is about 70 per cent females. The two President Medals for CAPE have gone to females, one

from Lakshmi Girls' and one from Naparima Girls'. As a matter of fact, I was informed recently that—I think about three or four years ago—for the first time in the Faculty of Engineering at St. Augustine that girls outnumbered boys in terms of registering for engineering. I mean, that was an impossibility. [*Interruption*] Well, my understanding is the Faculty of Engineering, and you can check your statistics on that. So girls continue to outperform boys, and I am not saying it is a good sign; the pendulum has swung, but probably it is swinging too far in the other direction now and there is a gender issue with males. The society is aware of that and the Government is putting plans in place to deal with that.

I am going to move on very briefly on sustainable management of water and sanitation for all, and—I need to get a little political here because water management is a function of the Water and Sewerage Authority, and the Water and Sewerage Authority, Mr. Vice-President, has been spending hundreds and millions of dollars over the last several years, and a lot has been said about what percentage of the population getting 24/7. It moved from 14 per cent in 2010—that is a figment of somebody's imagination—to now 70 per cent, which is also a figment of somebody else's imagination. And my thesis, again, very simple, once the companies that make water tanks continue to do good business, WASA is not doing a good job, because you are telling me that 70 per cent of the population have a 24/7 supply and every hardware you go to in Trinidad and Tobago does not have water tanks. So it is the best parameter to judge because everybody needs storage, and if you need storage you do not have a 24-hour supply. It is plain and simple as that. And how we manage waste water, how we manage water resource management, all of these things come into question now. I do not want to even go with the Beetham Waste Water Treatment Plant, all the scandal that has transpired there; the \$400 million extra on that contract. That could have been used

effectively and efficiently by WASA to really deliver the service to the people of this country. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, there are a lot of wrongs to put right.

**3.00p.m.**

I just want to deal now briefly with “build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”. Ladies and gentlemen, Trinidad and Tobago’s infrastructure, while not the way we want it, is very much advanced for a small island State. If you deal with the National Highways Programme, it is a programme conceptualized and developed by the People’s National Movement. It involved the development of four major highways in Trinidad to open up the infrastructural grid, the first of which was the San Fernando to Point Fortin Highway, which is at a very advanced stage of development. What that highway would do is create a freeway from San Fernando, Golconda in particular, straight on to Point Fortin, passing through Debe, Penal, Siparia, Fyzabad, La Brea, onward to Point Fortin; a total freeway. What it will do is open up the infrastructure of County St. Patrick.

I just want to go on record in this Parliament—I think it is the first time I am getting this opportunity—to say how this highway was designed. I was the Minister of Works way back in 2004, when the route alignment for that highway was done. The initial route alignment took the highway into San Fernando, coming across the South Trunk Road through Bamboo with an overpass, down to Paria Suites with another overpass, dualling the Creek, going to St. Mary’s Junction and onward to La Brea and Point Fortin. That was the orientation of the highway.

When I took it to the Prime Minister, Patrick Manning at the time, I never forgot what he said. He said, “Frankie, how could you possibly build a highway to



Point Fortin, whose rationale is to open up the infrastructural development of County St. Patrick, and bypass Debe, Penal and Fyzabad?” Where was the partisan politics in that? That is the reason why the highway was conceptualized as a two-pronged highway, one still dualling the Mosquito Creek, but that would only cater for San Fernando residents going into Point Fortin, and the north and central freeway going down to Point Fortin would pass through Debe, Penal, Fyzabad, onward to Point Fortin. So the entire county of St. Patrick is now available for the economic development that a highway truly carries with it. And that is national planning and national policy formulated by a People’s National Movement Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me deal with “reduce inequality within and among countries”. Mr. Vice-President, since Independence Trinidad and Tobago has been largely governed by a PNM administration, especially for the first 25 years under Dr. Williams, post-colonial. When you look at the sociological evolution of Caribbean societies over that period, one thing hits out at you most prominently, that unlike Jamaica, unlike the Eastern Caribbean, unlike Barbados to a large extent, Trinidad and Tobago was able during that period to build a vibrant and expanding middle class. That is what differentiates us from Jamaica. In Jamaica it is either you are filthy rich or you are dirt poor.

In Trinidad and Tobago, under successive PNM administrations, we have built a viable middle class. [*Desk thumping*] And if I should say so myself, the only time the middle class comes under threat is when another government gets into power, [*Desk thumping*] because then you start to see contracts favouring a particular select group of people. It is the PNM who instituted small contractors. It is the PNM who introduced CEPEP as a seed for budding entrepreneurs. Ask any contractor in Trinidad and Tobago—you do not need to know a PNM Minister

to get a contract. You cannot say that for the other administrations. The whole concept of building a large middle class is what has kept the social stability of this country.

So inequality within the society has been reducing significantly, and it is something that this administration, and I can speak on behalf of this Government, that we have been watching very, very closely, the growing tendency for inequity in Trinidad and Tobago, both in the social and the economic terms. We plan to continue to build the middle class.

Mr. Vice-President, let me make a comment on the housing policy. By reducing the qualifying income for HDC from \$45,000 to \$25,000, it has absolutely nothing to do with “the PNM is against the middle class”. It has to do with how you allocate scarce resources to where they are needed. For heaven’s sake, how can any reasonable thinking person in Trinidad and Tobago accept the fact that your monthly income is TT \$45,000 a month and you expect subsidized housing from the HDC? It makes absolutely no sense. So I want to put that to rest, because you are now in a higher income bracket. You are supposed to seek private sector housing.

In any event, the classic example of that was Victoria Keys. The Prime Minister announced recently that the value of the penthouse apartments at Victoria Keys—remember when the UNC got into power in 2010? Jack Warner and some of the other Ministers went and they redid the whole of Victoria Keys. They put granite counters; they put foreign hardwood floors. “All dat HDC doing, yuh know.”

The commercial value of the penthouse apartments at Victoria Keys is \$4.5 million. The midrange—well, it is eight floors: fourth floor, fifth floor and sixth floor—is \$3.5 million. The ground floor is valued at \$1.5 million, the one-

bedroom. How now can any reasonable thinking government, faced with scarce resources, go now and allocate that to an HDC applicant for \$700,000? If you irresponsibly do that, you will be giving that person a cheque for \$3 million. It is the same former UNC Government, now in Opposition, who is criticizing this administration for taking a course of action like that. The squandermania and the waste and the leakage and the haemorrhaging of state resources have been unparalleled in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. And they always hide behind seeking the interests of some sector of people.

Ladies and gentlemen, a government has to be fair, and it must act with malice to no one. I want to give this Parliament the assurance that this PNM administration will act with malice to no one. [*Desk thumping*] It will act in the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me now just deal with “inequity among nations”. That is a bigger challenge to face, because it does not fall under the remit of any single government, so you have to have international agencies monitoring that. You have to deal with how you handle the role of multinational corporations as they invade the domestic space of individual countries. But I remember at university I had a quote; I always kept it in my old notes; I forget which developmental economist said it. He said that the difference in the world is not so much between rich countries and poor countries. It is between rich people and poor people, because the rich people in poor countries are much better off than the poor people in rich countries.

What that says is that global inequity is something that the entire world should take cognizance of, because what we have is certain blocs of nations that are developing at such a rapid pace, and they are leaving significant parts of planet Earth behind. The United States is obviously at the top of the list. There is the

European Union and the European bloc that is, again, fairly developed. Then there is the whole idea of the BRIC countries that are trying to put some developmental agenda together.

One of the more positive things that has been happening in the world for the last 10 years or so is really the rise of Sub-Saharan Africa. For many, many decades, based on the economic models that the world is purporting, Sub-Saharan Africa did not seem to have a ghost of a chance in coming up to the developmental agenda. We are seeing some shining stars, Ghana for example is doing quite well. Nigeria, if it behaves itself, has the potential to do quite well. South Africa in particular is almost an economic powerhouse in Africa. I was looking at some statistics the other day, I think it was an *Economist* magazine, where by far the largest middle class existing in Africa comes out of South Africa. Again, some of the best indicators for development is really the size of your middle class, because that is where the inequity lies.

To me, no matter what spin you put on it, the most advanced economy, both in terms of economics, democracy and fair play is the United States of America, because it is the only country in the world that you could have a supervisor job in Wal-Mart, or you would be selling at a gas station, and the chances are you own a home, and the chances are you own a private vehicle, and the chances are you could take your family out for dinner on a Friday, if not every day. To me that is what equity and development is all about, where it reaches out to the common man.

The world is seeing a slightly brighter future. South East Asia is not doing so badly. The Middle East, with all their challenges, they have their oil wealth. Latin America was raising its head a couple of decades ago. I think their head dropped back down a little bit—save and except Panama and Brazil. But as I said,

the shining star now, to me, is the potential that we see coming out of Africa. Even the BBC has now a show called *Africa Today* or something like that, and they show extremely good clips of African entrepreneurs, and some of the good things that are coming out of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Climate change—I will not deal with that. The oceans:

“Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources...”

Again, my hon. colleague, the Minister of marine resources, will deal with the oceans. Just to make the point from an energy point of view, the continental shelf off the east coast is a major asset of Trinidad and Tobago. So while we look at it from an environmental point of view from fisheries, the wealth of Trinidad and Tobago is not based on terrestrial Trinidad and Tobago, but is really based on our resources that reside on the continental shelf off the east coast.

**3.15 p.m.**

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems;

Manage forests;

Combat desertification and halt the reversal of land degradation—

The Minister of Agriculture will hopefully cover some of those issues. But the final point that I want to deal with is:

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development;

Provide access to justice for all; and

Build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Mr. Vice-President—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Minister, you have five more minutes.

**Sen. The Hon. F. Khan:** Yeah. Five is enough. All I have said there, the highways, the infrastructure and what have you, that is hardware, but hardware cannot run without software and the software of any society, in my view, is its

institutional framework, and you cannot attain developed country status, in any form or fashion. You could have all the skyscrapers in the world, you could have all the subways in the world—when I say subway, not Subway sandwich, but transportation subways. You can have all the physical amenities, but if your institutional framework is not functioning effectively and transparently, you are not in the race.

You go the Switzerland—Switzerland is always at the top of every human development index you have—competitiveness, happiness, ease of doing business, what have you, institutional strength. You go to Brazil—there is not much skyscrapers in Zurich and in Brazil and in most of the Swiss countries. Okay? Because your institutional strength is what makes your society.

And again, it is in that context again I want to pass some criticism on the former administration because if they had done anything wrong to this country, it is where they attempted, or in some cases succeeded, in destroying some of the institutions that we had slaved since 1962 to now, to build in Trinidad and Tobago. And our mission as a new Government is to really rekindle back the confidence of the people in the institutions that they have grown accustomed to. [*Desk thumping*] That is what I call “we doing the software”. Okay? Because unless people have faith in their institutions, and unless people have faith in the people who perform in these institutions, there will never be equity, peace and justice in any society.

So, Mr. Vice-President, in closing I want to give the assurance that this administration, we have signed in on the Sustainable Development Goals. We plan to work with the United Nations and to set the timelines and the milestones as to how we work on this agenda to accomplish the deliverables. As a society, and as a small nation we are way advanced of most other nations in the world, I would say,

and I think we are on the right track. We have a good administration. We have a visionary leader. We have a hard-working Cabinet. We do have a very robust Parliament, both in the Lower House and the Upper House. I compliment both sides—both the Opposition and the Independent. Again, I want to congratulate Sen. Mark for bringing this timely Motion for, basically, our first debate after the budget, and I want to give the assurance that this Government is committed in implementing and bringing to fruition the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Thank you, hon. Minister. Sen. Small.

**Sen. David Small:** Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. I join in this debate this afternoon and I want to begin my contribution by indicating my thanks for the support and confidence placed in me this afternoon by, not only the sitting coordinator of the Independent Bench, but also my colleagues here. This is the first opportunity I have had in a little over two years serving on this bench to lead off the debate on this bench, and I take that responsibility seriously. So probably for once, Mr. Vice-President, today I am not going to talk about Raj Rajaratnam and those who should be “making ah jail”. I have a different plan for that—to deal with that. Not today. In my own way.

Mr. Vice-President, while the debate was going on, I am a data—forgive me—person, so I was listening to the issues on population and the economics. And I have my issue of the *Wall Street Journal*—today’s *Wall Street Journal*. And one of the articles on the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* says—the article is entitled, “The World New Population Time Bomb: Too Few People.” It has to do with the demographics.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*’s analysis, it says:

“Next year the world’s advanced economies will reach a critical milestone.

For the first time since 1950, their combined working-age population will decline...”

Now that is an issue about how—here is the difficulty with that. We have people living longer and then fertility rates are dropping. And then when you factor in the economic part of it is that, as people get older their spending habits change. And what the *Wall Street Journal* is saying is that it is going to have an effect on economic development.

I continue to read—and forgive me, I am a data person. I love to understand issues. I am always drilling down trying to understand, what do these issues mean? And these issues are live. We talk about it here today, but these issues are live and they are evolving. So what they are posturing here is that because people—there are going to be changes in the patterns of consumption, not only what people consume, but how they consume it, it has implications for economic growth for the world going forward. So, I just find it interesting. I was listening to the debate and I have my issue of today’s *Wall Street Journal*, just reading, just trying to keep up. [Crosstalk] Yeah. Certainly.

**Sen. Khan:** No. I wanted to make another point, but I really did not want to bother to go there, but that is the very reason that Germany is accepting a million Syrian refugees.

**Sen. D. Small:** Yes. Well said Mr. Leader of Government Business. So that there are issues around us and different countries have to take on different strategies to manage them.

So, Mr. Vice-President, I go directly into the meat of my contribution. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda which sets out a global development vision and priorities for the next 15 years, captures the hopes and ambitions of people around the globe for meaningful change and progress, including here in Trinidad and



Tobago. Through the adoption of this historic framework, Trinidad and Tobago has joined with countries around the world in pledging to leave no one behind by ending extreme poverty and prioritizing policies and investments to have long-term transformative impact and are sustainable. The SDGs would be officially adopted at a summit in New York—will become applicable in January 2016, and all implementation is supposed to be complete by 2030. It is a plan. It is a sticker in the post and we will see how it goes.

All of the Sustainable Development Goals sound wonderful and desirable. But a practical person myself also understands the possibility for negative and possible really bad results if there is not full inclusion and full information as we proceed along this path. The undeniable facts are that the selfish, the foolish, the ambitious and the just plain evil among us, are often successful in finding ways to exploit good intentions. So that vigilance and interdiction systems and punishment is critical—are going to be critical success factors to achieving these goals.

Mr. Vice-President, the SDGs have serious issues to address, and while we live here in our tropical paradise of Trinidad and Tobago, it is safe to say that despite the issues that we are dealing with, Trinidad and Tobago is a blessed country. We have access to reliable and cheap energy such that issues of availability, accessibility and affordability are not hot-button issues for citizens. Little do all or probably most of our citizens really grasp how precious this situation is compared to many other places in the world and just how critical a role energy plays in our drive towards sustainable development.

To illustrate, according to the United Nations Sustainable Energy for All initiative, billions of people live without modern energy. Almost 40 per cent of the global population, Mr. Vice-President, 2.9 billion do not have access to clean energy for household cooking; 2.9 billion people still use firewood and coal for

daily cooking for all of their meals. And when we think about we live in a place where we take it for granted—you want to prepare something, you only cook with coals by choice. Some people, 2.9 billion people cook with coals and firewood because that is all they have and it is serious.

Further, nearly 1.6—sorry, forgive me—1.1 billion people do not have access to electricity. One in six persons on this planet do not have access to electricity—something we take for granted, and in Trinidad and Tobago we are blessed, where we have electricity at rates that are really peppercorn.

The SDGs have recognized this critical gap. They include an energy goal, aiming to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, reliable and sustainable, modern energy. Indeed, Mr. Vice-President, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, made an interesting statement at a Washington D.C. conference in 2012. And I quote:

“Energy is the golden thread that connects economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability.”

Mr. Vice-President, we here in Trinidad and Tobago have that golden thread. We need to weave it carefully in order to generate the outcomes that create sustainable wealth for all of our citizens.

I want to—I am very happy that the previous speaker went through and listed all of the goals. In my talk here now, I am going to be dealing with several of the goals, not in any particular order, but the goals point or lead me in a direction of issues that need to be treated with.

So, I want to look at SDG 12.7 which says:

“Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities.”

Mr. Vice-President, I have to ask a question and that question is this: is it

sustainable that public procurement seems to have become a feeding trough for those who have access to those resources? Is it sustainable that legislation for public procurement is taking so long to be implemented after already taking several years to get through the Parliament? On this note, I am aware that moves are being made to make some amendments to that Bill, and I hope to play a part in getting this critical piece of legislation, not only through the Parliament, but actually up and working. We need to have public procurement legislation working properly in this country.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to look at SDG 16.4 and that has to do with:

“By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime. “

I ask, is it sustainable to continue with the endless talk about corruption? And yet no action is taken to conduct real investigations, pursue prosecutions and ensure that those who steal from the public purse and then openly parade their ill-gotten gains in the face of citizens are punished for their crimes. This SDG may require some new legislation or amendments, as “making a jail” may not be enough. Take back the money. Take back the items purchased with the money. And this is where—and this comes directly from the wonderful SDGs. I want to say, “return of stolen assets”. This is what this is about and this is something that this country has been talking about for a long time, but there needs to be some action.

Mr. Vice-President, I ask, is this sustainable that the detection rate for serious crime in this country remains in the single digits? And yet we receive suggestions that crime statistics are trending downwards and that all will be well. I did not drink that Kool-Aid. Is it sustainable that we have a straightforward system

for the appointment of a Commissioner of Police?

Mr. Vice-President, is it sustainable that or—I want move to the few points I have under sustainable goal 12 and that says:

“Ensure sustainable production patterns”

**3.30 p.m.**

Is it sustainable for our natural gas sector to be suffering for full supplies while some companies are sitting on found and proven reserves and have the option to develop them on their time schedule without any reference to national priorities? Is it sustainable that almost 70 per cent of the natural gas produced in this country today goes to an industry in which the State has less than 6 per cent ownership? Mr. Vice-President, is it sustainable that we have a state oil company that is generating an average of \$30 billion a year in revenue over the past five years, yet its annual profit margin is 1.9 per cent over the same period?

Mr. Vice-President, I want to now go to SDG 10.5, and that goes:

“Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen implementation of such regulations”

Is it sustainable for citizens of this country needing foreign exchange to have to make daily trips to the bank to get a measly US \$200 per day, and then when they get there they are being charged obscene fees to get the pittance being meted out to them while the fat cats have no such problems? Is it sustainable for every citizen of this country who has a bank account to be continually subject to exorbitant and outlandish fees while receiving poor customer service and virtually no return on their hard-earned savings? Is it sustainable that we continue to procrastinate about the existence of white collar crime, and we have financial sector watchdogs such as the SEC that have yet to expose any wrongdoings whatsoever?

So, Mr. Vice-President, if the system is so clean I would retract this and all of my previous admonishments and I would ask kindly for the SEC to please send a submission to The Guinness Book of World Records for a new category. And the category I am suggesting is “Cleanest Stock Exchange System in the World - Entirely Corruption Free”. Is it sustainable that when we look at the recent history of Clico, HCU and the FCB IPO there is a clear trend of behaviour favouring the enrichment of a few at the ultimate expense of the man in the streets? And yet the process of doing the investigation, bringing the charges, having people prosecuted before they could make a jail—I am unclear as to where that is—but the money has flown the coop, and the people are living fat lives and the citizens have paid the price and there does not seem to be anything wrong with it. I remember seeing a headline or a clip in a newspaper a few weeks ago where somebody said in Trinidad and Tobago crime pays.

Mr. Vice-President, is it sustainable that every single Senator with portfolio in this and previous Parliaments has deemed to be unworthy of receiving a pension because of a loophole in the legislative Pensions Act? As a Senator without portfolio myself, is it then sustainable to be here making contributions when benefits that accrue to all other Senators are being denied? What about equity?

Sustainable goal 16.6:

“Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels”

Is it sustainable that the institution of the Parliament is not in a position to manage its operations without proper and due autonomy? I was pleased with the move in the recent budget to engage the Judiciary in setting the stage for their autonomous operation. I believe that the Parliament is no less deserving and I look forward to direct action in this regard, and it would just be added to my list of pet things that I will continue to raise every so often to remind people of what my views are. Mr.

Vice-President, is it sustainable that the efficient functioning of the Parliament is being hampered by the ongoing lack of a legislative agenda that would lend some predictability to the process of debates and would very likely allow for improvement in the quality of same?

I want to make a couple of points under sustainable goal 8.9. Eight point nine goes:

“By 2030 devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products”

Is it sustainable that the national airline cannot provide a reliable and predictable air service between the islands of our twin island republic? [*Desk thumping*] To be clear, we are a unitary state, Trinidad and Tobago, yet the status quo is that it is a nightmare to get a flight whether as a citizen or as a visitor. Is it sustainable that we promote Tobago as a tourist product, yet in addition to the inter-island flight issues the airport facilities are woefully inadequate and substandard? Is it sustainable that our fellow citizens in Tobago have to pay more for virtually every product or service they utilize, and yet we talk about equality and being a unitary state?

On the issue of culture, is it sustainable that outside of carnival it is difficult to discern the sustained effort to promote other significant aspects of our culture as part of our tourism product? We all know about carnival. Is there no other tourism product that we can promote that can actually generate revenue?

I now move to sustainable goal 13, and that has to do with:

“Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”

Before I start, Mr. Vice-President, by training I am an energy person. I have lived in this business for 26 years. I have attended climate meetings all over this region and all over the world, and these are issues that I have a deep, deep feeling for. I

am able to understand that we all live in a world, in a place here where all of us are focused on what is in front of us, but we need to be able to suspend that and be able to roll up a “little bit” and understand that there are things happening in the world that could affect us.

So, Mr. Vice-President, is it sustainable that we sit and do nothing while on several fronts our existence on this planet and our activities are laying the foundation for cataclysmic climate changes in the next few generations? And I refer here to mankind in general. But, locally, in our own circumstance here, is it sustainable that we continue to give lip service to our own environmental laws? What about the regulation about vehicles emitting visible vapour? How many infractions of this occur daily as opposed to how many have been prosecuted? I would love to see the statistics if they exist. Is it sustainable that we very likely have an ecological and environmental disaster at a certain steel facility or at several sites within the control of a major state oil company, yet we do not enforce the existing legislation? Is it sustainable that large tracts of arable land and waterways have been and are being decimated from the ongoing illegal quarrying activity in the country?

Mr. Vice-President, according to a report entitled Quantification and Magnitude of Losses and Damages Resulting from the Impacts of Climate Change: Modelling the Transformational Impacts and Costs of Sea Level Rise in the Caribbean produced by CARIBSAVE and the United Nations Development Programme in 2010, and I quote:

“A 1m”—sea level rise—“would displace an estimated 110,000 people in the CARICOM nations...

Major resort properties were at significant risk...notably Belize...St. Kitts and Nevis...Haiti...Bahamas...and Trinidad and Tobago...”

Mr. Vice-President, I would encourage every Member here to go to visit the website of the five Cs, the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre. You go on the website and you see—you can go on the model and you can see what the water temperature around Trinidad and Tobago and the islands were in 1950 and see what the water temperature is like now. Everyone should understand that if you warm water, what happens? It expands. And these are things that are happening around us but we are oblivious because they are not yet affecting us.

I want to quote here from a statement by Dr. Ulric Trotz. He is the Deputy Director of the five Cs, and here is the quote:

“In 50 years, if the [models] are correct, the entire [Caribbean] landscape will be changed...Our beaches will have disappeared, our coastal areas eroded, our infrastructure degraded. It would certainly wreak havoc on the way we live.”

Dr. Trotz recently co-authored an IDB report that warns of as much as 1,200 square miles of Caribbean coastal land will be lost; half of Caricom's major tourist resorts damaged or destroyed by sea rise, surge or erosion, and scores of sea nesting turtle beaches wiped out. Even some of the airports, because of how they are located, will just disappear.

Mr. Vice-President, these are issues that have—we are all contributors to the problem. I am part of the problem, I drive an SUV. And this is where, when we look at the Sustainable Development Goals in this respect it requires some adjustment, and I am going to come to a particular thesis I have about economic development and climate change, and if we really do not change the way in which we think and in which we live, all of this is just talk, with the greatest of respect.

I have this under special mention. Is it sustainable or even desirable that according to The Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015, Trinidad and Tobago



ranks as follows:

- Diversion of public funds—we ranked 114 out of 144.

And just for the record the closer you are to 144 the worse you are.

- Favouritism in decisions of Government officials—we are 137 out of 148.
- Ethical Behaviour of Firms—we are 125 out of 144.

So, you wonder why I keep talking about the banks. We are ranked a hundredth out of 144 in innovation, and that speaks to the diversification agenda. Although the last time I spoke about it someone printed a nice article and said Mr. Small is saying things without—that I have no basis in fact; if anyone knows me and knows that when I talk, I do not talk unless I have the facts. But, I chose not to respond to that.

Mr. Vice-President, on the last point of innovation, I suspect Trinidad and Tobago might actually rank quite a bit higher on the scale if in their calculations they consider the schemes devised by the local banks to take fees from customers, not to mention the crafty operators who find new ways to steal money from the public purse. If they work those things into the calculations we have quite an innovative bunch of people here in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to share a clipping from an editorial by Marcia McNutt in the *Science* magazine dated November 13, 2015, and I quote:

Private firms are stepping up to their responsibility regarding climate change. This past summer, 12 major corporations, including General Motors, Apple, Google, Alcoa, and the Bank of America, pledged to invest more than \$140 billion in efforts to curtail CO<sup>2</sup> emissions in the next five to 10 years.

Within the past few weeks, 10 oil producers, representing 20 per cent of global production, have pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by curbing the flaring of natural gas and investing in carbon capture and storage.

I hope the Government Ministers are taking note.

Major companies—they want to invest in carbon, and we have a burgeoning market for that here in Trinidad and Tobago. I am not raising it because I like to talk. The best part of this announcement is the acknowledgement by energy giants:

BP, Pemex, Statoil, Saudi Aramco, Total, Royal Dutch Shell, British Gas Group, Eni, Reliance Industries, and Repsol, that climate change is a serious problem, and energy companies need to be part of the solution.

The list of companies I just read out: one, two, three, four of those companies operate in Trinidad and Tobago. And if they are making international pledges about investing in carbon capture and storage, I would like to believe that Trinidad and Tobago is somewhere in that mix. And if it is not in that mix, put up our hands.

Mr. Vice-President, I am still waiting on the news or announcements of any planned initiatives by the companies on that list who operate in the country. I am hopeful that good news would come, and that all would be well and life will go on and it would be swimmingly beautiful. But, I have lived on this planet a few years and I continue to say that as we do things, we have to understand that it is not just going to happen. It requires effort. It requires preparation, it requires understanding where we are as a country in our development cycle.

Mr. Vice-President, as a signatory to these SDGs, it would be very informative to get from the Government the current thinking on the road map and forecast time frame for the implementation of these goals. I am a reasonable

person, I do not expect the full implementation of every single goal. I do not expect that in anyway. But, as I have highlighted, there are issues that are clear and can be tackled quickly. What I would like to see is prioritization of the goals the Government believes are achievable and for which the resources are available. So that, Mr. Vice-President, because SDGs cover a wide range, and it is up to the Government of the day having signed the agreement and has the responsibility to say, out of these goals these are the things we think we can achieve in this time period.

**3.45p.m.**

It does not have to be a five-year time period, it can be whatever time period. And then out of the goals that we think that we can achieve, we say that these are the priorities that we are going to tackle, because we have to tackle these things in a structured manner. This cannot work, it has to have a shape, it has to have a structure, these are the things that we are going to tackle, this is the time frame and these are the strategies, these are the resources. Perhaps my training as a civil servant for 20-odd years—I understand about how you do things and you organize it. You say, this is the plan as we go forward and bring it out to people and let people come and say okay, good plan, bad plan, not so good plan, but let us fix it and make it a national plan, because I get the sense in the room, Mr. Vice-President, based on the previous comments, that this is not a non-partisan issue and there will be a non-partisan approach to this, and I am really, really happy to hear that because these things affect how we live. Things are happening in our planet that impact us and impact our future generations.

What I would like to say, Mr. Vice-President, is that what we should avoid is a situation where the SDGs end up in the wonderful stock of agreements in the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs in the next building, entered into by

successive administrations, but the follow-up is where the follow-up is. And the most memorable part of the agreement is the photo op, the photos exist, we need to move past that. These things have real, real impacts. I have been to many of the meetings and I am part—as the civil servant in the room I make sure I am not in the photo.

Mr. Vice-President, if you will permit me before I wrap up, I have a thesis, my own personal thesis, and my colleague, Sen. Mahabir may want to challenge me and I enjoy challenge. And my thesis does not require special economic training. Since I have been alive and I went to school and I have learned, everyone around the world tries to tell you that politic economic growth is something that every country should strive for. Every country in the world should be trying to grow its economy and have everything grow. And that is wonderful. I have no problem with that in theory.

The data. The data reveals that with positive economic growth there tends to be an increase in energy consumption. So that is not hard. You want economic growth, in order to get something else to drive that growth you consume more energy. As you consume more energy you emit more, you have more emissions. So that, Mr. Vice-President, and this is the big “if”, if current consumption patterns are not radically adjusted towards the use of less hydro-carbons and cleaner fuels, then if we just take a nice simple extrapolation outwards we are all actually contributing to the extinction of our species, and the big “if” in there is the consumption patterns.

If we continue to use energy in the way we have been using it, and everybody wants positive economic growth, because that allows you to get better terms on your loans and wonderful, but if the entire world goes down that road and does not radically adjust the consumption patterns we will soon have no place to live and

we, all of us would have contributed and would have said, “whoa”, we thought economic growth was good, and it is good, but we need to understand that the patterns of consumption of energy have to be radically adjusted, because this generation here, we will be dust very likely before the real effects hit. And this is the problem, because you are not feeling it or you are not sensing it, it is not a bother. That is my own personal thesis. I am not against economic development, but when you put the thesis together you start to wonder about whether or not this is something we should really put some more effort behind and understand that as a country and as a member of the World Market Place that we have to look at how we consume energy, what energy was formerly consumed and how we can change that mix. If we do not change that mix and we continue, the world continues along the path, well then there will be no more planet.

Mr. Vice-President, as I begin to wrap up, I want to say that in 2005, I was chosen to represent Trinidad and Tobago on an international study being done by the World Energy Council that concluded in 2007. I produced a report entitled, and I quote:

“Deciding the Future: Energy Policy Scenarios to 2050”

One of the core tenets of the World Energy Council that guided the studies is what they call the 3As. The first A is:

“Accessibility to modern, affordable energy for all.”

The second A is, availability.

“Availability in terms of continuity of supply and quality and reliability of the service.”

And the third is, acceptability.

“Acceptability in terms of social and environmental growths.”

Mr. Vice-President, after working on that report for two years, attending meetings

in several countries around the world and contributing to the drafting of several sections of that seminar report, I believe in the concept of international policy drivers and of the international cooperation to achieve globally positive ends.

Mr. Vice-President, I also understand the effort, the hard bargaining, the airing of different viewpoints and the consideration of various impacts that would have been part of the process to arrive at the SDGs. As I was also privileged, Mr. Vice-President, a few years ago to serve as the chairman of the working group on the energy text for the Fifth Summit of the Americas declaration. So I was in a room, Mr. Vice-President, chairing a process where we had members of states from 34 countries trying to agree on energy text and it took two years to agree on four pages of text. So I mean, I understand what it means, and you sit in a room where you recognize that every country has different issues. The Minister of Trade and Industry, Sen. Gopee-Scoon, who was the Minister of Foreign Affairs at that time, recalled I was deeply involved in that process in the negotiation. So I understand that to get to the SDGs, to get everybody behind it, the guarantee on effort that went into that.

Mr. Vice-President, in saying that the seminal nature of the SDGs is underlined by the global support it has received. While no set of policy prescriptions would ever be perfected, we are in a time of almost unprecedented global uncertainty as relates to energy pricing, national and personal security and turbulent climatic events. And I think I have a couple more minutes—and the energy pricing issue is so critical—I have too much information, forgive me.

Mr. Vice-President, the oil market has changed permanently. This is a matter—you have a situation now where you have a provider that can supply oil at almost—there was a phrase several years ago when I was a young guy, “just-in-time” Japanese—whereas the traditional model for developing oil, you know that from

the time somebody starts to drill to the time they produce, eight years. Once price goes up the shale oil guys can go in there and have oil for you in three months. That is a dynamic that has shaken up the whole market. They can respond in a time frame that is so compressed and if the price goes down after that, a shale well, the production profile is like this and this. So as long as the production goes on you just leave it and that is it.

There is a dynamic to this that is going to continue to affect oil prices going forward and as an oil producer we have to understand that and we have to be sensitive to that. And there is a lot more details I can go into but I wanted to share my thoughts on that, that the oil price that we have been living with—I am not saying that it will never come back, I do not want to be prognosticator, what I would like to say, Mr. Vice-President, on the data that I have—I have it somewhere on the iPad there—when you look at the entire history of West Texas Intermediate, from 1946 till today, the weighted average price of West Texas Intermediate is \$41.70. Where is the price today? If I go into Bloomberg on the iPad here, I checked this afternoon, it is about \$42. And this is where the data—forgive me, I enjoy the data, I enjoy understanding the data and the impacts it can have and I use the data to try to put forward rationale positions.

Have so, Mr. Vice-President, as I begin to close and wrap-up my contribution, the seminal nature of the SDGs is underlined by the global supporters received. The fact that the world leaders could sit and agree on something as far-reaching as the SDGs gives me hope for the future of mankind. And in that vein I remain ever optimistic that when the next generation and my family look back, I hope that they can say that, daddy, or grandpa, was not part of the problem. He was part of the solution. Mr. Vice-President, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Khadija Ameen:** [*Desk thumping*] Thank you very much,

Mr. Vice-President. On September 25, 2015, not too long ago, the 193-member, United Nations General Assembly, formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development along with a set of bold, new, global goals. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon hailed these as a universal, integrated and transformative vision for a better world. Indeed, it is a better world that Trinidad and Tobago must aspire to be a part of. The new agenda is a promise by leaders to all people, everywhere. It is an agenda for people to end poverty in all its forms, an agenda for the planet, which is our common home.

Mr. Vice-President, the new development goals and the broader sustainability agenda go further than just the Millennium Development Goals. It addresses the root causes of poverty and the universal need for development that works for all people. I want to quote the UNDP administrator, Helen Clarke who noted that:

“This agreement marks an important milestone in putting our world on an inclusive and sustainable course. If we work together, we have a chance of meeting citizens’ aspirations for peace, prosperity, and wellbeing, and to preserve our planet.”

The 2030 Agenda compels us, Trinidad and Tobago as a nation, to look beyond the national boundaries and the short-term interests, many of them partisan and political in nature, but, to us to act in solidarity for our long-term development. We can no longer afford to think and work in siloes.

In Trinidad and Tobago, and perhaps in other countries as well where there is a healthy competitive democracy, particularly, with our first-past-the-post system, partisan politics often play a major role in the short-term interest. The political party in Government may change, but as a state, as a nation our commitment to the United Nations Agenda must be continued. It was unfortunate



that in the last budget presentation you saw so many attacks against the former administration which were purely political and in many cases baseless in terms of the data and the information that was brought forward.

The People's Partnership manifesto was in fact based on seven pillars in 2010 that were pegged to the Millennium Development Goals. And our country's commitment to the United Nations Agenda was met by continuously implementing meaningful programmes and policies over several years, which ensured that this tiny nation, Trinidad and Tobago, met many of the goals that were outlined.

Mr. Vice-President, in my contribution today, I wish to share my position on the following: Millennium Development:

“Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere”

Millennium Development:

“Goal 2. To end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”

**4.00p.m.**

Millennium Development Goal 4:

“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”

And Millennium Development Goal 5:

“Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”

Mr. Vice-President, a gender equality report published in March 2011 by the Royal Commonwealth Society and Plan UK to mark the Commonwealth's 2011 theme, “Women as Agents of Change”, revealed Trinidad and Tobago to be the third best place to be born a girl out of 54 countries in the Commonwealth. [*Desk thumping*] Trinidad and Tobago was ranked above Canada, above Australia, above the United Kingdom. That

report also indicated that it is political will more than economic wealth of a nation which is important in achieving gender equality.

Mr. Vice-President, five years ago Trinidad and Tobago elected its first woman as a Prime Minister. Regardless of which side of the political fence you fall on, that is a signal achievement in the democracy of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] A woman holding such high office created for girls and women everywhere in this country, a very real achievement that made it realistic to achieve the stars. Perhaps it is the election of a woman that saw a number of gender equity issues receive priority in terms of policies and programmes.

In March 2011, Trinidad and Tobago's National Commission on the Status of Women to address socio-economic issues affecting women in this country—this Commission is now a permanent part of the governance landscape to tackle key obstacles which face women in our country with a special focus on poverty, crime and violence. It focuses on ensuring equal access to employment, health, education, training, technology and housing and, no doubt, this Commission is one of the key stakeholders that will play a role in ensuring that Trinidad and Tobago reaches the Millennium Development Goals.

I also want to share some figures that may be common to people who are aware of gender equity issues. In August 2015, 60 per cent of the classrooms in tertiary education throughout this country were girls. The Leader of Government Business referred to that earlier. At August 2015, the figures are a little different now. There was 28 per cent of parliamentarians who were women and 25 per cent of local government practitioners were women.

The Government must remain committed to the goal of greater gender equality enforced by legislation and policies. It is a goal that should not be partisan because there are many, many stakeholders who hold a key interest and will provide a balance when it comes to ensuring that this goal becomes a reality. We must work towards combating sexual harassment in the workplace, ensuring equal work for equal pay, and the availability of equal opportunities for education continues.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to now go to Millennium Goal No. 4:

“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”

I want to call on the Government to reconsider its position during the budget debate to not provide GATE to all students as previously existed. Not only will this promote social segregation within our country, it goes against Millennium Development Goal No. 4. And I continue to say that students of low income, middle income as well as privileged homes, deserve the same opportunities as top performers to access tertiary education in academics as well as technical and vocational studies, so that they can use opportunities in the job market. And in this regard I want to agree with the Leader of Government Business with regard to aligning the areas of study, the attractiveness of these areas and the availability of these programmes with the demand in the labour market. That has to be something that we do together.

Mr. Vice-President, I say this because we need to remove the room that there is for discrimination in the process with GATE. Today there are many question marks over GATE funding for tertiary education, and I trust that the Government would hasten to shed light. There is much anxiety

amongst students, those who are currently enrolled in programmes, those who wish to start programmes shortly and parents who play a key role in funding the education of their children.

My colleague earlier referred to the United Nations' acknowledgment of Trinidad and Tobago. Our country was singled out in Barbados at the Caricom Heads of Government meeting, for congratulations for having surpassed several of the development goals, including the achievement of early childhood care and education, and that, of course, is a significant milestone for us as a small nation.

And earlier I heard the Leader of Government Business indicate that in Trinidad and Tobago there is a challenge to absorb qualified persons, and I want to quote him. He said that under-employment is worse than unemployment. I know, Mr. President, that you will not ever hear an unemployed person say that. An unemployed person who is desperate for any opportunities will never say that. We have to be realistic. We have to think about the smallest, most vulnerable person in our society. We have to think about the young person who is unemployed, and there are many illegal income opportunities for them—drugs, guns, technology, white collar crime—that are available. So let us be real. Please, do not tell the young people of this country, or anyone, as a matter of fact, that it is better to be unemployed than to be under-employed.

Mr. Vice-President, I move to Millennium Goal No. 2:

“End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”

This goal has been the victim of short-term partisan interests over the past decades in this country. We must engage all stakeholders in shaping policies

and programmes to achieve this goal. We must include parliamentarians, local government representatives. We must work in cities and rural areas. We must listen to science, listen to the data and follow academia.

Sustainable production of food is not only the business of farmers or those in the agricultural sector. There are a number of issues that are still outstanding, including the labour shortage that those in the agriculture sector face: prices, the terms of input items; markets. Many farmers remain with produce on their hands—by-products; how you treat with what is grown locally.

I also want to touch on nutrition. Good nutrition also has to be a part of our culture. I am aware that in the School Nutrition Programme under the previous administration there was a concerted effort and much success with integrating the produce from local farmers into the meals of children. I know that in the last budget it did not receive a lot of focus, but the allocation towards the School Feeding Programme in Trinidad and Tobago has been severely cut, and I hope that in the contributions from those opposite we could, perhaps, hear a little bit in terms of how that will affect the nutrition of those who receive lunches, as well as the availability—the number of lunches. Has the number of lunches been reduced?

I know there is one song that they sing over and over, but let us be real. There are children who do not have a meal unless they get food in school from the School Feeding Programme, and we must ensure that they are well nourished. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Vice-President, in many developed countries they do not suffer from the problem of being under-fed, they suffer from being over-fed. Both are a result of poor nutrition, and which is why I say that good nutrition must be ingrained in us culturally.

Mr. Vice-President, I wish to move to Millennium Goal No. 1:

“End poverty in all its forms everywhere”

The World Bank recently published a poverty analysis and it identified subgroups among the poor to include the unemployed, those with low levels of education and female-headed homes. Female headed homes are on the increase in Trinidad and Tobago, and many of the poor households in our country are also more likely to be larger; to have more children and not be the nuclear family structure.

The previous administration, for the first time ever in the history of Trinidad and Tobago there was the Ministry of the People. That Ministry sought to provide a social safety net for the most vulnerable in our society. And while it is the prerogative of the Government to prioritize and reprioritize what receives attention, even in the worst time economically, no country should ever leave its poor, its elderly, its children, its differently-abled, its most vulnerable, behind. And I trust that while the most vulnerable awaits the promised review and consultation from the new Government, that they will hasten to ensure that this social safety net stays in place and that the measures that were put in place under the Ministry of the People to make those programmes not hand-out programmes, but empowerment programmes, that those stay in place.

I say that because there are many who are still under the perception that these social services, these grants, are often simply hand-outs. Many of those came with conditions under the Ministry of the People to empower those receiving. So, for example, the grant that was provided for mothers of young babies also came with conditions for those mothers to participate in activities that would build their parenting skills, for example; family

planning information, to put them in a better position.

**4.15 p.m.**

The grants that dealt with some of the other—the social welfare grants also brought some of those women into courses that saw them empower themselves and eventually open their own business. And I say that because I know personally, as the Chairman of a regional corporation, I participated in many activities within the region, and one that I thought made a big difference in the community, in the families, in the homes, was where women participated and they all came together to learn a skill but after that, they were allowed to depart with the equipment from the course so that they could, in fact, start up on their own. So it was not just about “giving ah fruit, it was about planting ah seed that would bear fruit and put ah family in ah better place”. So I hope that those things would not be neglected and those areas in those programmes will continue to receive attention.

Permit me, Mr. Vice-President, to respond to two things. Earlier in the contribution of the Leader of Government Business, he indicated that it was the PNM Government who made CEPEP possible and brought employment and so on in that regard. Having opportunities is one thing, having opportunities for people in one part of the country alone is discrimination and inequality, and that is what took place when CEPEP started. [*Desk thumping*] It was under the People’s Partnership Government that CEPEP went towards this entire country. [*Desk thumping*] I can tell you that previously, CEPEP was predominantly on the East-West Corridor in the constituencies held by the People’s National Movement, and that changed under the People’s Partnership Government. [*Desk thumping*] South of the Caroni river, Tobago, the east coast, the coastal areas with the CEPEP marine, also saw work being done, and employment was provided everywhere in this country, the environment was maintained everywhere in this country, and that

is the role of a Government: to provide for all citizens across Trinidad and Tobago.

*[Desk thumping]*

Further to that, it was unfortunate that the Minister may have relayed some incorrect information. It is on record that several close relatives of former PNM Ministers received CEPEP contracts including siblings, and it is a matter of public record. So it is unfortunate, as I said, but I am sure, perhaps, if he is provided with the information, he would not have indicated such a thing.

Mr. Vice-President, he also spoke about the—insinuating that the People's Partnership Government played a role in undermining the institutions of the country. I wonder if he can recall the action of the previous PNM administration against a sitting Chief Justice. I wonder, the undermining of the institution that he spoke about, if he also wanted to refer to the independence of the Judiciary that was under threat under the previous PNM Government. *[Desk thumping]*

Mr. Vice-President, I thank you for the opportunity to speak. I say no more.  
*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Vice-President:** Thank you, Sen. Ameen. Hon. Minister of Trade and Industry.

**The Minister of Trade and Industry (Sen. The Hon. Paula Gopee-Scoon):** Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. I would like to proffer my contribution on re: the possibilities and an appreciation for the Sustainable Development Goals and our commitment as a country, Trinidad and Tobago, to achieving these goals as far as is possible and as wide as is possible.

Sustainable development, when I looked for a definition, it really focused on the needs. The essential needs of the world's poor and to which overriding priority must be given, and I took that out from the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. I am really pleased and I add my congratulations



to the hon. Senator for bringing this kind of Motion, this type of Motion, for discussion, [*Desk thumping*] but that is if we stay on course.

So that I think that all nations must be applauded for these sustainable goals which they have come up with and of course, all of the inherent targets which are about 169 in number. What it does is that it outlines the development priorities in areas of critical importance for humanity and the environment as well. It takes into account three dimensions and that is the social, the economic and the environmental. Basically, it speaks to looking at the measurement framework of it which I think is very, very important. It builds on three dimensions of human well-being.

The first being human well-being of the present generation in one particular country here and now. It also speaks to the well-being of future generations which we ought to be concerned about as a country as well, in terms of our assets being preserved for future generations; very important to us as a Government as well. In terms of assets, it speaks to the four types of capital: the economic, the natural, the human and the social capital. What this highlights is that it is very developmental in nature and it forces a country to look at the choices that it must take—the Government, the choices that it must take in terms of how we are going to impact future generations. It also speaks to the well-being of persons living in other countries as well. I am saying, as a nation, Trinidad and Tobago, we will always be looking at other countries and in particular, our region, the Caricom, and our role in their development process as well.

I know that there was some concern—I believe it was said by Sen. David Small—as to whether these Sustainable Development Goals will be just signed on to and left dormant, and I want to give the assurance that that will not be done by this Government. It really would fall to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure

that there is follow-up and there is a framework of follow-up and implementation right throughout the Government. So that we, as a Government, welcome the adoption of these goals and again, we reaffirm our commitment to its implementation in alignment with our own national development plans.

May I add for the edification of those who are looking on, as well as those in the Chamber, that the new framework for sustainable development involves four main parts and that is the political declaration which establishes the eradication of poverty as the overarching goal of the Agenda. Of course, embedding the concept which one previous speaker spoke of and that is that no one must be left behind. It also speaks to the actual Sustainable Development Goals which must be implemented by all Member States but, of course, giving due consideration to the fact of national circumstances, capacities and different levels of development as well. The other main part, a very important part, is the means of implementation and also the follow-up and review, and of course, that speaks to the national, the regional and the international review of progress towards the implementation and achievement of the Agenda.

So that again, I speak to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs having a real responsibility in terms of facilitating national participation in terms of the regional and global follow-up, and in the review of implementation as well, and ensuring that all of the global review arrangements are suited to our national circumstances and of course, securing and channelling technical assistance and capacity-building to national authorities in support of these implementation efforts.

In fact, my colleague, the Leader of Government Business, he introduced the whole question of our alignment in terms of the manifesto of this PNM administration. In fact, that manifesto gives an overview of how we will move towards a more sustainable economy, society and environment. And I want to

compliment those who, in fact, prepared that manifesto because what it says, in essence, is that, as a Government, the PNM Government, we are fully committed to sustainable development, and this manifesto, in fact, fulfils our commitment to the well-being of our citizens and the well-being of our future generations which we spoke about as well, and of course, the well-being of those around us.

It is our vision, this manifesto, for mainstreaming sustainable development. Within the manifesto, there would be several headline indicators as well based on our economy and our society and our environment and these line up very well with those indicators within the Sustainable Development Goals. That manifesto is now official Government policy and so it is not to be taken lightly. It is official Government policy and all of the Ministries have been required to submit to Cabinet—and they have all been agreed upon—all our action plans based on those objectives in the manifesto which has become Government policy and which will lead directly to all of our Ministries. So all of us have, in fact, developed our action plans to ensure that all of these goals and objectives do, in fact, materialize.

Based on these action plans, we, in the Ministries, will be able to chart and to measure and to report on our progress all up to—which, of course, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will take account of for further progress reports as well. We will be measuring the health, the wealth, the well-being of our great country and of our citizens. And as the actual Sustainable Development Goals also speak to the involvement of other sectors including the NGOs and the private sector, so that as we move towards implementation, we would invite—this is of all our goals and objectives—all stakeholders to partner with us—that is the NGOs, the private sector—to comment, to participate, to contribute and to develop Trinidad and Tobago. That is, in fact, our style.

Let me speak specifically to goal number 8 which is to:

“Promote sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”

And I will only speak to some aspects because this goal is so broad-based. Goal 8.1 speaks to an objective of sustaining per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances. Goal 8.2 speaks to achieving higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation. Goal 8.3 speaks to promoting development-oriented policies that support productive activities, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and of course, including access to financial services as well. Then it goes on to speak of productive employment for young people as well and education and training which has been covered already.

But I want to just go to the question of economic growth and to say that our Government—and I am so proud of it and we are all proud of it on this side—has had a history of sound economic performance, and that is through the creation of sound economic plans without a doubt. And it predates our independence actually in 1956, under the People’s Charter, when, from that time onward, there was always a clearly defined economic task for Trinidad and Tobago.

At that time, it was to reorganize the economy to make the full use of all of our resources, both human and physical, and later on, oil. Later on in the 1970s, our development strategy changed to seek out private or official partners for joint venture operations, and of course, further on, we would have had a fall in oil prices in the 1980s, and we would have learnt from our errors and—we should have actually but it has not happened in more recent times with this Government—with the last Government, sorry. And of course, I go to 1990s when, in fact, Trinidad and Tobago delivered continuous growth averaging 7 per cent per annum, an unbeaten record in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Minister. Hon. Senators, it is now 4.30 p.m. and time for the tea break. This sitting will now stand suspended until 5.00 p.m.

**4.30 p.m.:** *Sitting suspended.*

**5:00 p.m.:** *Sitting resumed.*

**Sen. The Hon. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. Before we left I was speaking to goal 8, and the whole question of economic growth, and I addressed our Government's contribution to sustained economic growth historically. It falls on us now—what is before us now, is our immediate plans for economy and growth as is expected of us, with regard to the Sustainable Economic Goals, and of course, our own national development priorities as well. It is that we have to build on our areas of strength. You will find again, if you look in our manifesto, on page 17, our areas of strength being:

“...mature energy sector

- A reputation, until recently, as an attractive destination for investment in both the energy and non-energy sectors
- Creative, adaptable and resilient people with appealing artistic and cultural expressions
- A strong manufacturing base
- A vibrant services sector”

It is upon these areas of strength that our key objectives of economic policies lie. These key objectives would include our:

“Macroeconomic stability, strong institutions and investor confidence”

And, of course, our:

“Sustainable growth and diversification

Job creation...”—et cetera.

So that it really falls on us now, practically at a time of low energy prices and low

energy production levels as well, to be more responsible in ramping up contributions in the non-energy sector to our country's growth levels and growth requirements.

So, therefore, much of that falls to the Ministry that I am responsible for, which is the Ministry of Trade and Industry, in terms of ramping up contributions to our economic growth and to our revenues in particular. Some of these programmes which we are pursuing in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, would be the engendering of growth and development of exports, particularly in the non-energy sector as I said, and our objectives will be to expand domestic trade exports to traditional markets and to acquire new market share as well.

Our other programmes will include: the strategic development of the targeted sectors for diversification, and I will speak to that later on. And, of course, facilitating the growth and development of domestic and foreign investments; also supporting the growth and development of business through various mechanisms, including public/private partnerships, and facilitating a fair, transparent and efficient business environment; also, of course, protecting consumers and, of course, empowering consumers as well.

But the question of diversification, as you would realize, remains a priority and it is, in fact—diversification is indeed addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals. Again, if you go to page 37 of our manifesto, the very areas of diversification are, in fact, highlighted. This would include as well tourism, but as well:

“Agriculture and Agro-processing

Maritime Services...

Fishing and Fish Processing

Aviation Services...

The Creative Industries...

Financial Services...

Software Design and Applications..."

So that again, past efforts at diversification were substantially left behind and, of course, totally unsuccessful I would say; almost totally unsuccessful.

Again, if you look at the *Review of the Economy 2015*, you would realize that the manufacturing sector which for some time had been quite healthy, the contribution to GDP has, in fact, fallen by 8.6 per cent in 2010 and 8.1 per cent in 2015. In fact, in all our years of investments, you have seen decline. So that one of the critical successes would have to be this question of diversification, and of course, it would involve the private sector's involvement as well. We, of course, will need their full support in this.

In the Ministry of Trade and Industry, we are also very concerned about impediments in the way to attracting investments and achieving diversification, as we would need in the face of all of the impediments that are there, and so on. So that we are, in fact—and this draws my attention to the Global Competitiveness Index of which we have spoken, time and end, and all of the problematic work factors as poor work ethics, corruption and access to finance, and so on. All of these impediments we would have to take on board to ensure that there is rapid development in terms of the non-energy sector as well. This diversification must, in fact, be realized and must become a true manifestation, if it is that we are going to have economic growth at the kinds of levels that we had in the past.

So again, speaking from the Ministry of Trade and Industry's perspective, I would want to say that we are in support of the SDGs, and also of our national development goals, that we would remain committed to drive the expansion of all of the industries that I have listed as well, and of course, to explore new and

emerging industries for future development; also to ensure the full facilitation and realization of all investments, and I am speaking of both foreign and also domestic. And, of course, to proactively address all of the challenges that affect the competitiveness of the private sector; that is our contribution as well.

The SDGs drilled down, in fact, to multi-stakeholder partnerships. In 17.16, it actually speaks to:

“Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries”

This, of course, brings our attention to Caricom and our commitment to Caricom, and to sharing and, of course, the partnerships that must exist among the countries of Caricom, in supporting all of our Sustainable Development Goals. Because as you know, if countries in the Caribbean fail, Trinidad and Tobago fails, as the Caribbean remains our number one export market. But not only so, they are in fact our brothers and, therefore, this multi-stakeholder partnership as seen in the SDGs, that partnership is, in fact, very, very important.

I want to say that our Government is resolute in repairing our relationship with Caricom, which has been severely damaged over the last five years. I want to say that we remain very committed to regionalism as a whole. It is of paramount importance to use. We in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, again, we are very committed to the CSME process, to rebuilding it, to reviving it, with the explicit objective of promoting free and efficient movement of goods and services, labour and capital, in the shortest time possible.

Indeed, on a wider basis speaking to not only Caricom, but all other small



developing states, Small Island Developing States. We must recognize and, in fact, we duly recognize as a Government, the special circumstances of all Small Island Developing States, and Trinidad and Tobago indeed falls within that category as well, with our special circumstances in the context of sustainable development throughout the agenda, as well as the special circumstances of middle-income countries where we, in fact, are categorized as a subset of developing countries, including in the areas of support for capacity building and strengthening data capacity for implementation, and for follow-up and review as well.

We spoke earlier—in the context of Small Island Developing States, there was discussion earlier about climate change, and the importance of climate change. I want to just speak to or draw reference to the conference which is taking place at this time in Paris, that is, the Climate Change Conference, the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. I am trusting that they are all okay there, but I am sure that security is at its best.

It is at that meeting it will be determined—the success of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, there will be some alignment in particular for us small developing states, where sustainable development cannot be achieved in the absence of an effective global response to the threat of climate change. I think that discussion was addressed by Sen. David Small, but in the context of energy companies, and in terms of the retrofitting of companies; in terms of the carbon emissions and so on, and that threat to climate change. I want to say that the conference which is taking place particularly will address our circumstances as Small Island Developing States, and the outcomes are very, very important for us achieving our Sustainable Development Goals in the area of climate change as

well.

I also want to draw your attention to the question of the involvement of the private sector, in their whole Sustainable Development Goals Agenda as well. It had been said and had been quoted that:

“Sustainable development will not be brought about by policies only; it must be taken up by society at large as a principle guiding the many choices each citizen makes every day...”

This speaks to the private sector, not only to the private sector, but it speaks to our involvement each and every one of us, in achieving these Sustainable Development Goals. So as a people, it is very important that we understand these SDGs in the most basic form, and that we do our individual contributions to achieving these Sustainable Development Goals.

I want to just quote from Item 67:

“Private business activity, investment and innovation are major drivers of productivity, inclusive economic growth and job creation. We acknowledge the diversity of the private sector, ranging from micro-enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals. We call on all businesses to apply their creativity and innovation to solving sustainable development challenges. We will foster a dynamic and well-functioning business sector...”

This relationship which we speak to, Mr. Vice-President, of fostering a dynamic and well-functioning business sector, and the relationship existing between the Government and the business sector, is one that is supported by our Government, and was spoken to, in fact, in our budget presentation. Again here, the importance is not just only about their contribution to economic growth, but their contribution as well, the private sector's contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

I read with interest an article on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. It is called:

“UN Sustainable Development Goals: Good For Business”

This is by Dr. Bob Eccles, Chairman of ESG Quant fund manager, Arabesque Partners, and I quote:

“The brutal reality however is that governments alone cannot ensure the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, all of which have very concrete quantitative targets, without the support of the corporate community.”

This is very, very important especially in the face of the global economic challenges not confined to Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean alone, but across the globe.

**5.15 p.m.**

I think a previous speaker would have addressed the whole question of declining growth and the kind of challenges that major countries are in fact facing. So, again, highlighting—and this is a private sector organization highlighting the need for the private sector to be involved, and not only in terms of contributing to economic growth, but also in the area of corporate social responsibility. I bring this up because the Ministry of Trade and Industry also has an agenda in terms of promoting and supporting corporate social responsibility, especially where we have a healthy private sector, energy sector and manufacturing sector as well.

Another article speaks to Impact 2030, and it is really very interesting, Mr. Vice-President. This is the rising of goals which were just addressed at the United Nations meetings only in August, and here it is there is this Impact 2030 rallying around global corporations to help achieve the sustainable development goals through corporate volunteer efforts, and it is that corporations around the world are

banding together through this entity called Impact 2030, and mobilizing corporate volunteerism to help combat critical issues that the world faces.

So this is not about economic growth, this is about all of the issues including poverty, climate change, et cetera, across the board—all of the 17 goals—and it is that all of these leaders and these partner companies in Impact 2030 are formally declaring, via Impact 2030, how they as an organization and their employees are contributing to global development and their commitment to continued support of human capital investment towards the sustainable development goals. I raise this again from the perspective of volunteerism which this PNM Government supports as well, because the Government cannot do it alone, and Impact 2030 has drawn one of the largest commitments of its kind towards these global goals and, of course, I am sure it would grow as other companies join as well.

In a sense, Mr. Vice-President, I am almost making a call for our companies in Trinidad and Tobago to do the same and, of course, I am sure that all of the larger companies have been exercising corporate responsibility, but I want to say it is not to the extent that it is required as it is necessary to assist Government in achieving these development goals. We want to partner with them. So that collaboration between the UN and Governments and the private sector is particularly important if we are to achieve any successes at all.

So that when businesses work in tandem to address the challenges that are facing us as a society, the potential for real impact is staggering, and it is important, and this is a call that I make as a Member of our Government to the private sector as well to encourage volunteerism and, of course, participation in achieving these goals.

It is amazing that there is this company called Pearson and there are these 17 Sustainable Development Goals and they in fact came up with their 17

development goals as well—the alignment of it—and they are brief, but when something is brief it catches your attention. Their own goes:

“No Poverty...  
No Hunger...  
Good Health...  
Quality Education...  
Gender Equality  
Clean Water and Sanitation...  
Renewable Energy...  
Good Jobs and Economic Growth...  
Innovation and Infrastructure...  
Reduced Inequalities...  
Sustainable Cities and Communities...  
Responsible Consumption...  
Climate Action...  
Life Below Water...  
Life On Land...  
Peace and Justice...  
Partnerships for the Goals...”

I am really heartened by this kind of response, and my hope is that the business community realizes that it has a challenge as well to rise to this very important contribution which they can in fact make.

One of the—and as I said before, in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, we do in fact have a national corporate responsibility policy which we would in fact be taking to the Cabinet as well, which is again to ensure that companies achieve a balance of economic, social and environment imperatives while at the same time

addressing the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders. If this policy is adopted it will in fact promote corporate social responsibility awareness and, of course, increase Trinidad and Tobago's brand loyalty which is very, very important at this time as well.

Someone earlier spoke to the question of public procurement and hinted at the fact that this Government is slow in terms of its buy-in to the procurement Bill. I want to make the point that I think it is the Minister of Finance and current Acting Prime Minister who in fact made the presentation in the Lower House on the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Bill. He in fact addressed the question—he put forward the amendments which we are looking at, and which are very important amendments speaking to the whole question of the tribunal among other things, and it has now gone before a joint select committee. I want to give this Parliament and the country the assurance that we would treat with this with haste, and that this is going to be one of our priority Bills to be brought before the Parliament.

There are a number of other areas which we are committed in terms of our poverty alleviation as well and, of course, one of the main ones is the question of education, again to say that we have always been committed. One of the speakers tried to say that the question of tertiary education and early childhood education was as a result of their administration, but I just want to emphasize that education has always been important to our Government and this is from time immemorial, again, going back to 1956 and all of our educational plans; two five-year plans introduced by us, the question of development of schools, secondary schools, training colleges for teachers, technical schools as well, we have always been focused on it.

We are a Government that introduced the University of Trinidad and Tobago

along with the University of the West Indies to in fact ensure that those areas which were not given attention at UWI would in fact be holding on through the UTT as well. So I just want to put on the table that we are a responsible Government when it comes to education in the provision of GATE, and to ensure that all of the necessary employment sectors are in fact fulfilled in terms of having human development—sorry in terms of human development and an alignment to jobs required for growth in this economy, and to say that it will continue to be a priority for us despite our economic challenges. May I ask how much time I have again?

**Mr. Vice-President:** Just about 5.32.

**Sen. P. Gopee-Scoon:** Oh, I have quite some time. So, perhaps with the time left to me, I could perhaps focus on the whole question of trade again. I would like to go back. I did not realize that I had this time. Trade is very, very important as we speak to increasing economic growth and in fact having sustainable growth. You would be surprised, but the sustainable development goals actually speak to significantly increasing exports of developing countries and, in particular, with a view to doubling the least developed countries share, by global exports, by 2020.

I want to tell you that within the Ministry of Trade and Industry only last week and, again, with a view to increasing our exports as a developing country the Ministry of Trade and Industry held a participatory session with all of the stakeholders within the economy. I speak to all of the chambers—I am talking about the general chamber of commerce: the chamber of Penal, the chamber of Chaguanas and the chamber of San Juan as well—all to collaborate and to hear their views as to which countries that they see us penetrating and the kind of support that they would want from the Ministry of Trade and Industry and from the Government. At the end of the discussions we came up that those priority areas for

us would in fact be—this is outside of the region which we are used to—the Dominican Republic and Haiti and also Guyana and Suriname with their economies already growing from strength to strength and quite sustainable at rates of 8 and 7 per cent, and also of course looking at Costa Rica and Panama.

It is the intention that we would take a note to Cabinet so that we can examine whether we can put trade and facilitation offices within these countries so in fact it comes a lot easier for exporters penetrating those markets. We are not looking at exports in terms of large businesses, but also in the small, medium and micro enterprises businesses as well, and we are working with the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to ensure that there is an approach across all types of businesses to ensure that we in fact grow and develop our exports which are very important for contributions to economic growth.

Another area which I perhaps could touch on again is—I think I addressed the whole question of—I think I spoke extensively about diversification as much as I can say here, but perhaps I should close then. I need not use all of my time and I, again, give my commitment, this Government's commitment to ensuring the alignment of our goals with the sustainable development goals to ensuring that the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs remains resolute, in fact ensuring that there is follow-up to the achievement of these goals, and there is a review of the implementation of these goals, and all of these arrangements are in fact put into context of all of the global arrangements with regard to reporting and ensuring that these sustainable goals are in fact realized.

The actual Motion speaks to mobilizing, to go to the exact words because I know we have strayed a bit in our debate. It speaks to the exact words of mobilizing the resources required to support implementation and I think that I have addressed the question of the private sectors involvement in mobilizing resources,



and addressed the question of the population as well in terms of their individual commitments to supporting the implementation of these sustainable development goals.

We commit as a Government as well to take stock of the Agenda 2030 and all of its attendant goals as well and, of course, if it is required—a thorough review is required by Parliament, we would in fact be amenable to that. I want to thank you, Mr. Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Thank you, hon. Minister of Trade and Industry. Sen. Dr. Mahabir. [*Desk thumping*]

**Sen. Dr. Dhanayshar Mahabir:** Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President, for granting me the opportunity to contribute to this very important debate this evening. First, let me commend Sen. Mark for having the foresight to bring this important Motion before us for debate and discussion, and also let me say that the contribution of the debate this evening makes me proud to be a Senator in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago [*Desk thumping*] because for the last couple of years we have raised the bar with respect to the kind of topics and how we can come together to address critical issues of the day and forward solutions.

The issue before us, Mr. Vice-President, really is sustainable development, and whenever we are speaking about sustainable development we really focus on the future as well as the present. In the past, we focused on our needs only, but now we are very cognizant of the fact that there is a future generation that is with us and is yet to be born.

**5.30 p.m.**

To this effect, I wish to lay on the record my gratitude to my Research Assistant, Lakshana Mahabir, who happens to be my daughter, for providing free research for me as a member of the next generation—and it is free but it is not

sustainable. So I hope that at some time the Senate will allow an allowance for us to be able to pay for our research assistants, because there is a limit to how much the young will want to give our generation with respect to their intellectual property which they have expended resources to accumulate. So, I do wish to thank her for the invaluable research assistance that was provided at very short notice.

Mr. Vice-President, let me start with a particular Pope, and his name was Pope Alexander VI, and Pope Alexander VI convened what, from the records presented to me, would perhaps be the first world conference of nations coming together to discuss matters of interest to the world, and I am talking about the Western World. I am not aware of any associations between China, Japan and India, which may have occurred, I do not have the records, but we do have the records of 1494, the Treaty of Tordesillas. What was that treaty about? Well, Spain and Portugal decided that an agreement was necessary on how to divide up the world discovered by Columbus, and they obtained an arbiter, Pope Alexander VI, to make a decision on their behalf which would be binding because the church was powerful, it had moral suasion, and it could bind an agreement. You did not have The Hague at the time so you did have Pope Alexander.

In that particular treaty we saw Portugal being given Brazil, and Spain being given the rest of the Western Hemisphere. What we saw starting from 1494—of course, if someone were to ask relevance to sustainable development, I will beg indulgence; I will tie it together. You see, whenever the world, at the time Portugal and Spain, thought it was in their interest to come together and convene a conference, they did—1494 conference, Treaty of Tordesillas. Then the world came together, so we saw the Western World, the Western Hemisphere being divided between Spain at the time and Portugal, with England being the interloper;

England the pirate, knocking off the ships of the Spanish Main. They were the largest brigands, they were not part of that agreement. They were intervening in a legally binding international agreement. We saw, subsequently, that having divided our hemisphere, the powers in Europe saw another part of the world that was open for division, and that was Africa. So that in 1884, at the Treaty of Berlin, at the Berlin Conference, Germany negotiated for Namibia, England was able to get Kenya and Egypt, Spain got the Spanish Sahara, Portugal got Mozambique, France got almost everything else. Every country in Europe was able to divide Africa, because for them Africa was just a map that needed a pencil and a ruler, and we saw the boundaries.

We saw in 1919 the Treaty of Versailles where, because of all these divisions, people got into squabbles. Whenever you have divisions and the divisions are not really clear there will be disputes. The disputes would lead to war and the war led to a treaty, Treaty of Versailles, 1919, the warring powers in Europe came together to form an armistice. And that did not last too long, we saw in the Paris Treaty of 1946 the warring powers coming again to settle their differences. What is the point? The point is that the world comes together to discuss matters of interest to the world. In the Treaty of Versailles, 1919, we saw the creation of the League of Nations, which became this United Nations that we are talking about. It was forged out of the First World War, out of the conflict in Europe as an interest group of the colonial powers at the time dominating the world.

The world at the time did not include the colonial territories. It did not include Africa. We had no voice. It did not include Asia. It included the countries with power, privilege, and countries with resources to dominate. It was the Age of Imperialism and so we found in 1946, at the Paris Treaty, the world being divided.

There is a division subsequently between East and West, the Soviet Block and the Western World, new institutions being created, Bretton Woods to organize world finances. The IBRD—the World Bank was created—International Bank of Reconstruction and Development, not our development, European construction. These institutions were meant to serve that developed world. We have to understand the line from which we are coming.

Mr. Vice-President, post 1946 what did we see? The emergence of the former colonies obtaining independence, India being the first. In the 1950s, the leaders of this next world, “the rise of the rest”—we are the rest—they decided this world order is not working for us, and so in the 1950s we observed the following, Nkrumah, Nehru, the President of Indonesia, Sukarno, Nasser and Tito coming together to form a very important organization, the Non-Aligned Movement. The Non-Aligned Movement, a grouping of countries which were now emerging based upon furthering the interests of the world that was emerging. That Non-Aligned Movement arose because the developed world had their own interests and their own agenda. Now, later on, we saw, 1974, from 1954, 20 years later, another organization, to which Sen. Khan somehow alluded, called the New International Economic Order, a larger group of countries expanded from the Non-Aligned Movement.

So that not only are they saying that we should avoid the conflicts between Europe and the Soviet Union and North America, let us avoid nuclear conflict, focus on economic development; 20 years later they were ready to trade, but what you found was the rise of multinational corporations, and you found barriers to trade, and they wanted to develop on their own but there were barriers placed by the developed world. So that the New International Economic Order was meant to correct one of these new 2030 goals, way back in 1974, to end inequality amongst

nations, and it addressed in 1974 the growing powers of the multinational corporations, the non-tariff barriers to trade, the tariff barriers to trade; all the impediments that the developing world was facing with respect to the subsidization of their agricultural products to prevent products from Africa and Asia and the Caribbean from entering those markets free of restrictions.

The point, Mr. Vice-President, is this, when the world has an interest in coming together, as it did in 1494 or in 1919, it will come together to further its own interests, but when the world comes together the interest that is being pursued is not necessarily our interest. This was recognized by Nkrumah and Sukarno and Nehru, and it was recognized by the New International Economic Order, and I think we need to recognize that now. Of all the countries in the United Nations not all of them have our interest. There is a division between those who have and still those who are yearning to have a bit more.

I saw this. I saw this at the IPU. I saw the divisions. I saw the agendas. I saw the differences in interests, and I think one of our goals, as we look towards 2030, is that Trinidad and Tobago should look at the example set by the New International Economic Order. Trinidad and Tobago should look at the example set by the Non-Aligned Movement, and we can decide that our interest lies with combining with other countries at our stage of development, countries with similar interest. Let us aim to do the following—apart from all the grandiose goals I see, let us aim. Where are we? Do we have a say at the IMF? The answer is no. Do we have a say in the World Bank? The answer is no. Are we anywhere in the UN Security Council? The answer is no. Do we have an influence on their agenda? The answer is no. What are we talking about? All of us must conform to certain goals but, you see, the presidency of the World Bank will be of one nation, not a developing nation though the clients of the World Bank are large and developing

countries, but the President is going to be selected by the larger countries; the IMF, a European will have it, and so on, and we are not there to influence the policy.

Let us set a target, should we not try to at least obtain the position of chairmanship of the IPU. I was at the IPU with Sen. Mark. I think Trinidad and Tobago should at least try to see how we could influence decision-making at that level, and once we get there we would be in a better position, in my mind, to be able to force some of the countries in the advanced world to make the kind of commitment that we are being asked to make so that all of us will be conforming with the standards set. For example, this 2030 goal is going to require a tremendous amount of resources, recognized by Sen. Mark, but the developed world has not committed to an increase in aid. They have not committed to an increase in the requisite development financing. Aid, since 1990, has not been high on the agenda of the developed world. They have left the developing world on its own devices, and the good thing about that is this, aid went into Eastern Europe to develop there from Europe, largely diverted the new countries that were being declared independence, but the reality is this, there is, since 1990, a rise of what is called “the rest”—the rest of the world, formerly known as the Third World went on minding their business.

When was the last time we have had any news coming out of Africa? Sen. Franklin Khan alluded to that fact. Not much news coming out of Africa, that is good news because the last time we heard news out of Africa was Rwanda, and so on, and after that, the countries in Africa, the many countries were developing. Today, not many people know, the rate of growth of Africa, in general, is twice the rate of growth of Europe. They are growing silently, quietly, unobtrusively, and they are doing it without development assistance. We need to remind people that when the UN speaks, the UN has to speak not only from the perspective of the

West, but also from the silent developing world—people minding their business, doing what they have to do, achieving the goals, achieving the goals which are theoretically placed in these documents, but they are achieving them because that is what they are doing as they quietly develop their counties. We could, and we should, at our meetings in the international fora ask them, the developed world, so how much aid are you going to provide on a per capita basis for the achievement of the 2030 objective? Let them commit to that. It is okay for them to ask us to do things, we should have the power.

**5.45p.m.**

It is for this reason, Mr. Vice-President, if we could get a place at the IPU, chairmanship of the IPU, we could get all the developing countries together. All of us want to achieve these 16 objectives. There is one of them I have some issues with, and I want to discuss it with this honourable Chamber. But I am in agreement with all of them. We want to lower infant mortality. Who does not want to lower infant mortality rates? Who does not want to lower maternal mortality rates? Who does not want cleaner air? Everything is a laudable objective, and we are trying our best to achieve them on our own. There is no longer the impetus in the developed world to enable the developing world. We are doing it on our own. They are holding back their hand. Good in talk, but short in action.

For example, they talk about human rights. I would like to know from the Americans: Are you going to cease and desist from giving aid to countries which abuse human rights, simply because they support your own domestic policy agenda? You cannot give aid to repressive regimes. If you are going to support human rights, then let us say, the aid we give, the development assistance we give must be to regimes that conform to certain minimum standards of human rights.

There are many things the developed world can do that they are not doing,

and there are many things we have to do that we, of course, must begin to achieve. There is the rise of the rest. The rise of the rest means the rest of the world no longer depending upon the developed world for direction. We are doing this in Asia. We are doing this in Africa. We are doing this in the Pacific. We are doing this in the Caribbean and we are doing it in Latin America as well, quietly without much fuss.

What really is the agenda that we need to follow? No Government or Opposition is going to dispute the 17 objectives. However, the problem arises with the timelines: the resources and how we are really going to achieve them with the minimum institutional capacity that we have. We need to build institutions. Let us look at the issue before us. It refers to sustainable development, but really it is not really sustainable development. Sustainable development is very precise. What this SDG issue is about is development broadly, elimination of poverty and a number of those goals, human rights and climate change and sustainable tourism.

You see, sustainable development is really based upon a simple notion. The notion is that we need certain goods and services for a quality of life that we desire, and we must not while we fulfil our needs, compromise the ability of the next generation to achieve their own aspirations and to experience a similar quality of life. So we use, we leave, we use sensibly, and the next generation is able to experience a quality of life as well. It means that we need to assess our needs, and we need to assess our wants. Our needs are basic. We should be able to satisfy all of our needs: food, clothing, housing, shelter, health care. Those are basic needs. We say, if you do not satisfy those basic needs, the quality of life is unacceptable.

But then Sen. Khan made a valuable point. There is a difference between our needs and our wants. Our needs can be quantified. Our wants are unlimited. Having had shelter, we want a fancy apartment. Having had transport, we want a



bigger automobile. How much should we want? Can we control our wants, given the resources available in the world, the finite resources? Two types of resources: one that is fixed—there is a fixed amount of lead in the earth, there is a fixed amount of oil, there is a fixed amount of copper and tin, and then there are renewable resources. We could renew our forests; we could renew our fish stock; we could renew our animal supply. So there are renewable resources and there are fixed resources.

Given total resource availability, Sen. Khan of course is correct. The entire world population cannot all consume at the level consumed in North America, US and Canada, and expect the next generation to consume similarly. The planet does not have these resources. And so we have to talk now, not only about the rate of growth, not only about expanding our income, but to talk about adequate income. What is an adequate income? We know what the minimum we need to go is. According to the UN document, the minimum income for which poverty was defined is US \$1.25 per day. They later revised it to US \$1.90 cents per day. So we can define a minimum; the world has not yet defined a maximum. How much really would be an adequate level of income that we could sustain from generation to generation?

The US is too high. Some of the poorer countries like Guinea Bissau may be too low. But is there somewhere in the middle that we could find a level of resource that the world's population can enjoy as a group, and yet replenish from one generation to the next? That is the challenge now. It is a sustainable income. What is that level? It must cover basic needs. What it means, therefore, is that there will have to be the elimination of this notion called the Third World. That is the world that is consuming at \$1.25 a day. We now want two worlds. The rich countries, we do not want them to get poor, but the poor countries we want to bring

them into the middle income countries where, hopefully, there will be a position of stability. Where once you reach there, we say the citizens of this country can live pretty comfortably.

When you look at those grandiose points, we ask ourselves: What should we do in Trinidad and Tobago? We have to define our objectives. What do we do in Trinidad and Tobago to make sure that our resources are sustainable, our economy is sustainable, and the quality life is sustainable? Let us look at it from our country's perspective. Every country would have to do the same thing.

Let us look at it from Trinidad and Tobago's perspective. We need to focus on our generation because we have needs, and also because a generation prior to us gave us things. So we have a moral obligation to look after the young generation, because we got. We just did not come here alone. We were nurtured by a generation which preceded us, and a generation which is to come will have certain expectations because it is the equitable thing to do. But we need to look at the welfare of the next generation and the unborn generation, not only from an equity perspective, but also from an efficiency perspective.

We need them—Sen. Small alluded to this point—we need the next generation to look after us. You see, at one time they were our dependents. At some time we will be their dependents, and it is therefore necessary for there to be intergenerational transfer of resources. Given that, we need resources, and we need to ensure that they can enjoy resources. Let us look at what some of the low-hanging fruits for Trinidad and Tobago are. Not too much theoretical work, but practical things that we could do to ensure the sustainability of our economy.

First, Mr. Vice-President, I think we need to recognize we are an island economy. This is the kind of economy we have. We are a small island developing State. As a small island developing State, we have certain peculiarities, our

coastline is very important. Given that the coastline is very important, our reefs are very important, we talk about sustainable tourism as one of the development goals. We simply have to ensure that our reefs are not placed under stress. What can we do to ensure that every hotel in Tobago, every hotel in Trinidad has a processing plant for its waste and does not use the sea as a sewer? We need to examine that now and make sure every tourist plant is compliant with respect to sewage treatment, because the incentive for simply pumping it into the sea is a very easy thing to do. It is a common property resource. Let us commit ourselves that every one of those hotels will be compliant environmentally with sewage disposal. It is easy to do, and if they are not, shut them down until they are compliant to so do. If we do not do that, we will be talking.

One of the problems with this particular programme is that we are not concretizing the objectives. We need to lower poverty, but how? We need to have sustainable tourism, but how? We need to ensure that the infant mortality rate is reduced, but how? Let us put in some of the “but hows” inside. Agree with the goals and say, we need to ensure—at the hotels at least—we need to start somewhere concrete, practical and pragmatic. Our hotels must be compliant; no more sewage in the sea. If you are doing it, we shut you down until you are compliant.

Secondly, we are a small island developing State which relies heavily on drilling activities. It should not be that Fishermen and Friends of the Sea all the time have to complain about certain drilling activities causing tremendous stress to the life in the sea. As Sen. Small said, let us establish some of the rules and regulations and enforce them, so that the companies drilling on our seabed will know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. What they would not get away with in another part of the world, they should not get away with it here. It means

that our EMA must be able to enforce on that more, enforce certain regulations so that we protect our marine resources.

It is always said, you know, you have to teach someone to fish and you feed them for life, but that is only because there is fish in the sea. It is no sense teaching a man to fish and you kill out all the fish. Let us make sure that we protect our marine resources in that way.

Mr. Vice-President, simple things, let us do them. They are not being done. Illegal quarrying is a huge problem. Simply take a drive up to Asa Wright. You are going to Asa Wright and you are going into a nature resort, and on the way you see huge chunks of the hills being cut. Long time—and when I say “long time”, when I was a little “fella”; that was a long time ago—you are going into San Fernando you saw green. In the 1970s that San Fernando Hill was excavated. I do not know how that was allowed to happen. There is a San Fernando rock, but I do not know if there is a San Fernando Hill. We lost that.

Government, this is your challenge. Let us declare certain areas of the Northern Range a national park. There must be no quarrying there. If we do not do that, the illegal quarries will simply take everywhere they find, and they will destroy the Northern Range. It used to be that you saw green in San Fernando. I hope the time never comes when you are driving from central, and you no mountain range in the north. If you do not regulate, it will happen. That is part of our natural stock.

The Parliament is a wonderful place, not only because of debate, but because we hear the problems at agencies. The EMA came before us, and when the question of illegal quarrying arose—these are things we could do in the Parliament—they said they cannot enforce the law because these illegal quarries have people who will do them harm. So the police cannot help you? No, they are

afraid of the police. My suggestion was simple: why do you not simply talk to the military, ask them to do some military exercises close to where the bad guys are, just train and so on, and it could solve the problem. But we need Government intervention and a commitment to eliminate—[*Interruption*] I tell you, time goes when you have been enjoying time. Do not worry, we have plenty more time to talk. Ten more minutes will give you ten solutions.

Illegal quarrying is something the Government can address. It is a low-hanging fruit. Let us concretize some of these objectives. Let us develop a policy for our natural wildlife. The Government has a policy—the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources has a policy. Well, okay, we can go and the hunters can have a certain amount of game for their livelihood. I understand his position; however, at the same time, there is a need. I understand the need of the hunters to earn a living, but at the same time there is a need for we the people, as we walk through the Charuma Forest and the Northern Range, to see an agouti as well. We should not only have to go to the zoo to see the iguana. We should be able to protect our wildlife, because if we do not, as in the North Sea there was over-fishing, we can have over-hunting and the extinction of certain species.

Let us look at that policy again, and let the conservationists among us indicate how much wildlife we can take out of the system in a year, and provide regulation. It should not be *carte blanche*.

**6.00 p.m.**

Building on the hillsides: we think that we could build anywhere in the country. Let us regulate building on the hillsides. Because it is true the people who own land on the hillsides have a right to a beautiful property to build a home. And we say squatters have a need for a home. At the same time, Mr. Vice-President, the people in the Diego Martin valley have a right to live in a

flood-free environment as well. So when we talk about sustainable development, we are looking for rights of—[*Interruption*]

### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government (Sen. The Hon. Franklin Khan):** Mr. Vice-President, as much as I am enjoying Sen. Mahabir's contribution, I now beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senators, before I put the question on the adjournment, leave has been granted for two matters to be raised on the Motion for the Adjournment of the Senate. Sen. Mark.

### VAT on Zero-Rated Items

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. May I welcome the Acting Prime Minister? [*Desk thumping*] I have to extend my warmest congratulations to the Hon. Colm Imbert, you know. And having regard to the exigency of the moment and the need for the hon. Prime Minister to be elsewhere, I would want to deal with the Motion that addresses the issue of VAT. That is the first matter I would like to examine, and that matter deals with the failure of the Minister of Finance to identify the range of goods and services currently zero-rated and which would attract the 12.5 per cent VAT rate effective from January 01, 2016.

Now, Mr. Vice-President, as you would recall, the Minister of Finance in his 2015/2016 fiscal package on page 36 indicated and I quote:

“...I propose...”—as a result of a manifesto promise—“...to reduce the Value Added Tax rate from 15.0 percent to 12.5 percent.”

He went on further in his statement to say and I quote:

“The combination of widening the base, increasing collection and

compliance, and reducing the rate is expected to yield approximately \$4.0 billion.”

Now, we have been attempting to get from the hon. Minister exactly what this reduction from 15 per cent to 12.5 per cent would really mean. Because we are dealing with ordinary people and we are in difficult times, as we have witnessed as phase one at the NGC—wage freeze, salary freeze, retrenchment will follow. So, we are in difficult times. And I would like to appeal to the hon. Minister, Acting Prime Minister, that we need to face the truth and we need to level with the population. I do not think we should surprise the people. Let them know from now what is the secret list, if there is a secret list. Because, Mr. Vice-President, the hon. Minister of Finance must be conscious of where the \$4 billion in value added tax would be coming from. Which items would be attracting \$4 billion in revenues?

Now, I go to Schedule 2 of the VAT or the Value Added Tax Act, Chap. 75:06. And as you would recall some 7,000 items were zero-rated back in 2013. And in Schedule 2 there are several food items that currently do not attract a 12.5 per cent VAT.

So, we in the Parliament on behalf of the people would like to communicate with them to let them know in this period of structural adjustment, in a period where everyone is being asked to take and to carry their fair share of the burden of adjustment, what items would be subject to a 12.5 per cent rate of VAT? Is it going to be rice? Is it going to be flour? Is it going to be margarine? Is it going to be milk? Is it going to be bread? Is it going to be baby formulas? Is it going to be cheese? We do not know. And there are many items here in the second Schedule that we need some clarification on.

This is why I have asked the hon. Minister of Finance to be with us this

evening so, at least, he can share with the population exactly which items will attract the 12.5 per cent rate come January 01, 2016.

We know, Mr. Vice-President, apart from basic food items that I have identified, there are also a number of other products that are currently zero-rated. There are medicines and drugs of a kind available only by prescription. We have bus services. We have agricultural equipment. We have, Mr. Vice-President, diabetic equipment and devices for testing glucose in the blood and urine. These are currently zero-rated.

So, we would like to know and the people would like to know which items on January 01, 2016 would be attracting the 12.5 per cent rate of VAT? And I think it is only fair that we do not go into Christmas without levelling with the population, and come January 01 we see in the full-page ad in the newspapers these are the items that will now attract a 12.5 per cent rate, whether it is food, pharmaceuticals, agricultural products. What?

So this is why as I said, Mr. Vice-President, it is important for us to level with the people. Let us tell the people the truth as to what is involved in this particular matter.

I do not believe that the Minister of Finance has a secret list. He cannot have a secret list. He must be aware that \$4 billion must come from certain products in the country. That is why he was able to arrive at \$4 billion. And all we are asking him to do, as people in this honourable House, as Senators of this honourable House rather—and the hon. Minister of Finance represents people. He is a Member of Parliament for a very important constituency. And we represent—although not directly, but indirectly—close to 342,000 citizens in this country who voted for the People's Partnership and we have to go and speak and we must tell them what to expect. And I am sure that the Government will want to enlist the



support of the Opposition in this matter. So that we can hold public meetings very soon to tell the people which items the People's Partnership—well of course the UNC is campaigning right now [*Laughter*] so we can take the opportunity to campaign and tell the people, well look, these are the items—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senator, your time is up.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Okay. All right. Could you just give me a second to wrap up?

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Senator, your time is 10 minutes, [*Crosstalk*] and you have a case of 10 minutes. So—[*Interruption*]

**Sen. W. Mark:** I know. I know. Yeah. Yeah.

**Mr. Vice-President:** I think you have asked the question and you have elaborated on it.

**Sen. W. Mark:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

**Mr. Vice-President:** So, I will go on to the Acting Prime Minister and hon. Minister of Finance. [*Desk thumping*]

**The Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert):** Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. I think the hon. Senator has to get accustomed to his new role. You are no longer in charge. This is not your kingdom anymore; to use your famous words, hon. Senator—“this is your kingdom and you are the king”. I remember that clearly.

Now, Mr. Vice-President, I was a little taken aback at the wording of the matter on the Motion for the Adjournment, and I think it is necessary to read it.

“The failure of the Minister of Finance to identify the range of goods and services currently zero-rated and which would attract the 12.5 per cent VAT rate effective from January 01, 2016.”

I was not aware that I was under any obligation, prior to January 01, 2016, to identify the range of goods and services currently zero-rated, and which would

attract the new rate of VAT. So, I cannot see, hon. Vice-President, through you to the hon. Senator, how on earth could I have failed to identify the items, since we are six weeks away from January 01? So, I was slightly confused at the drafting of the matter and I am certain I gave no such undertaking to identify those items prior to January 01.

Secondly, I think it is necessary to put this matter into its historical perspective. When the value added tax legislation was introduced in 1990 there was a number of services which were exempt and a number of other services which were zero-rated. I note that the matter only refers to zero-rated services. It does not refer to exempt services. I think it is necessary to put this into perspective.

So when the VAT regime came into effect, the exempt services included medical services, bus services, training and education, real estate, rental of residential property, postal services, betting, gambling and lotteries, financial services and services supplied by persons not resident in Trinidad and Tobago to an enterprise under the Free Zones Act.

In addition, the zero-rated services included unprocessed food, rice, flour, milk, margarine, bread, baby formula, medicines and drugs available only by prescription, aeroplanes and ships, natural gas, crude oil, pest control services, domestic travel between Trinidad and Tobago and a few others.

**6.15 p.m.**

Now, the VAT regime has been tampered with, I think is the best word to describe it, since 1990. It has moved way beyond the original intentions of the value added tax system that was proposed in 1990. Since then the following items have been added. Food related items include: corned beef, curry, fresh butter, peanut butter, salted butter, smoked herring, cane sugar, cocoa powder, coffee,

mauby, orange juice, herring, mackerel, ghee, meat, yogurt, dairy spread, tea, cereal grains; prepared and preserved meat, luncheon meat, cake mix, oatmeal, waffles, vegetables, fruits and nuts, mushrooms, tomatoes, olives, maraschino and glacé cherries—that was an initiative of the former Government, maraschino cherries now, they do not attract VAT—jams, fruit jellies, marmalade, fruit puree, fruit paste, pineapple, guava jam, prepared foods; all non-alcoholic beverages, spices, pepper, essence extracts, soya, tofu, gluten, edible seeds, fish, gelatine, cornmeal, seasoning, sausages, dates, prunes, et cetera, et cetera.

I cannot go too long, Mr. Vice-President, I would run out of time. But the list has expanded enormously, and then on a non-food: Golf balls, lawn tennis balls, inflatable balls; a series of inputs in the manufacture of pharmaceutical products, a whole range: acetyl salicylic, allantoin, ammonium chloride, benzoic acid, et cetera. A long, long list of inputs into the manufacture of pharmaceuticals, and then analgesics, cough and cold preparations, antacids, laxatives, oral rehydration preparations; then drilling rigs, drill ships, pipelay vessels and barges, geophysical survey vessels, oil skimming vessels; security cameras; products and services—fulfilment support limit to products and services related to application processing and validation, account establishment, regulatory reporting, information technology, ICT project management, and so on, and so on, and so on.

What we are doing now, Mr. Vice-President, is reviewing all of the items that were added from 1990 to now. I can tell you now that maraschino cherries are coming out. [*Laughter*] That I could tell you. So, we are reviewing all of the items added between 1990 and 2015. There are currently 241 categories more or less, and as the hon. Senator has indicated, over 7,000 items within these categories. We are seeking to reduce the categories from 241 down to approximately 100, and we are currently compiling a list of items that are

important to the livelihood of our people, and the basic cost of living using weighted indicators and data associated with the retail price index obtained from the CSO.

As you would know hon. Senator, there is a basket of goods that is used to determine the retail price index, and this is the basket of goods used by a household. We are using a scientific approach to this matter. We have had a number of meetings between Customs and Excise, the Board of Inland Revenue, and the Ministry of Trade and Industry will be meeting with us at the Ministry of Finance tomorrow actually, and I would think that by the end of this month, if not, by early December we would have compiled the draft list of items that we believe should attract the reduced rate of VAT and the list, obviously of zero-rated and exempt items.

And, certainly before January 01, 2016, a reasonable time, we will publish the information so that people will know and they could make the necessary adjustments. But what we are seeking to do is try to restore the VAT system to its original moorings, and also implement the zero-rated and exempt approach only to basic essential and non-luxury items.

I thank you, Mr. Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Vice-President:** Sen. Mark.

**Sen. Mark:** May I indulge you? When I reach about eight minutes could you give me a hint?

**Mr. Vice-President:** Say again, I did not—

**Sen. Mark:** I say when I conclude—

**Mr. Vice-President:** No, no, we move on, is either you are asking a question or you are moving on to the next question.

**Sen. Mark:** I thought you called me.

**Mr. Vice-President:** No, no, to move on to the second question, or you do have the ability to—

**Sen. Mark:** Well, that is what I am saying, so I rose. But I am just seeking your indulgence.

**Mr. Vice-President:** No, no, not for you to contribute further on the first question in terms of addition to the two minutes.

**Sen. Mark:** That is what I am trying to—you are not hearing.

**Mr. Vice-President:** Or, or, okay, sorry. Well, I did not hear that. Yes, I will give you a hint when you have two more minutes. No problem, no problem.

**Sen. Mark:** Do not be so warm under the collar. Anyway.

### **Crime Rate (Measures Implemented)**

**Sen. Wade Mark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. The issue that I wish to raise now is the worsening crime situation, crime rate in our country. I know that we have witnessed thus far, according to the data I got from the newspapers. I have not gotten any official statistics, and you may be able to help us, as of November the 19 we had about 373 murders for the year.

We also know that in the month of September which was described as the bloodiest month in our history in terms of the month of September, we had over 50 murders in this country. Both islands are under stress when it comes to the slaughter of the innocent, whether it is Tobago or whether it is Trinidad. And you know what took place in Tobago with the Wheeler family, and we know what is taking place in Trinidad with many other families.

What is also significant, Mr. Vice-President, is a development that has really generated a lot of concern among the citizenry, and that is the slaughtering, butchering of children. We saw what happened with a young child, I think it is

somewhere in Penal, her throat was slit by her father, and then we witnessed somewhere in Diego Martin, only recently, a young child who was sleeping with her 10-day-old baby sister, she perished in a hail of bullets. Now, the reality is that we know that the drug trade is a serious problem in this nation. We know that the borders of our country still remain relatively porous, although we know that assets have been recently acquired by the Coast Guard.

We also know, Mr. Vice-President, that according to statistics, the Commissioner of Police has indicated that close to 82 per cent of the murders that occur in our country, the preferred weapon of choice is the gun. So, there are some real challenges that we face in this land, and then the fear of crime and violence is real. People are concerned. And now that the season is approaching of goodwill and peace towards all men and women, we could expect the criminal elements to go on a rampage in this land. So, what is of concern to us in the Parliament, and in the country, is the efforts that are needed in order to bring about some degree of security and peace in our nation. And people are not too happy, they feel that, somehow, with your best efforts hon. Minister, you seem not to be on top of that particular danger that we are faced with. You seem not to be stepping up to the plate as you ought to by the people. The people I am speaking about.

I know this country is merciless or without pity. So, I am offering my concern because I think that you are trying, but it would not be too long if you do not provide the kind of commitment in terms of resources, in terms of action, in terms of the ability for people to feel a sense of safety and security. It would not be too long before people are going to call for you, the hon. Minister of National Security, to hand in your resignation.

**Sen. Gopee-Scoon:** What?

**Sen. W. Mark:** No, I am telling you, I am saying that for instance the crime

situation in the country is one of concern and I am saying that the Minister of National Security is trying, but you are not trying enough. You are not trying hard enough, and therefore children are being murdered in this country, human trafficking is on the rise in this land, murders are on the rise in this land, and with the best efforts we are still seeing these challenges. And, I am just asking the hon. Minister, given all that is taking place in the country at this time, what efforts, what are some of the measures you have taken, and you intend to take, in order to rekindle that sense of safety and security in the hearts and minds of the nation?

People are concerned about the situation in this land. And I know that, as I said, Mr. Vice-President, the Minister is attempting to put this thing under some control, but somehow it seems that his efforts are not paying off in the way that he would like.

You know when the People's Partnership left office murder rate was beginning to fall. [*Laughter*]

**Sen. Gopee-Scoon:** What was the statistic?

**Sen. W. Mark:** You know that serious crime was down. The Commissioner of Police indicated for the first time in 30 years, and if you want to dispute that with the police commissioner you can do so. But, the police commissioner did indicate for the first time in 30 years serious crime was down in this country.

So, it was going down. The challenge was murder. That was the challenge, and that is the same challenge you are faced with hon. Minister of National Security. And all we are saying, Mr. Vice-President, we would like the hon. Minister to tell the country this evening, as we approach this good season, as we approach the season of goodwill—

**Mr. Vice-President:** Senator, two minutes.

**Sen. W. Mark:** Thank you, Sir—what measures are you taking to reassure the

population that the crime situation is in hand, and the terror threat that we are faced with here in this country, that you as the hon. Minister of National Security is on record as saying, does not constitute a threat to our national security. ISIS and the recruitment of young citizens in this country to go and fight, and you told this nation hon. Minister, that did not constitute a threat to our security. I hope that was a mistake, and they misquoted you.

So, tell this nation, Mr. Vice-President, in closing, what measures are being taken by the Minister of National Security and by extension the Government, to give the citizens of this country the assurance that the hon. Minister of National Security is on top of the situation, and that people can have a sense of safety and security as we approach the season and beyond.

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. [*Desk thumping*]

**6.30p.m.**

**The Minister of National Security (Hon. Maj. Gen. Edmund Dillon):** Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-President. In examining the national security environment, one must first look at the nature of the environment, the characteristics of the environment—at this present time, environment is characterized by gun-related murders, drug offences, human trafficking, robberies, crimes of passion, domestic violence, as well as white-collar crimes and criminal activities—in order to make a clear determination of what the hon. Senator referred to as the high incidence of crime.

I want to remind the hon. Senator that in June 2010 when the then Government took over, the murder rate for that month was, in fact, 55 murders, and then we heard about a 120-day crime plan that we have yet to see after five years and five Ministers of National Security. [*Desk thumping*] So just relate to June 2010. When we entered into Government, September 7, 2015, the murder



rate had started to increase for that month before September 7 and continued thereafter. So we inherited that sort of pattern that took us to a high murder rate in September 2015, and as I go on I will show you that the murder rate had reduced last month and we continue as I will show you in a while.

Mr. Vice-President, what this Government can safely indicate is that the high incidence of gun and drug-related crimes and murders can be attributed to external and internal factors and, of course, our socio-economic situations. It may be prudent to point out that the previous Government, for whatever reasons, whatever reasons they alone may know, have neglected to put measures in place to sub-guard our porous borders. We do not manufacture guns in Trinidad and Tobago, yet as the goodly Senator mentioned, guns have proven to be the weapon of choice. And we have seen the illegal trafficking of guns because our borders remained unmanned for five years, Mr. Vice-President. So we are now dealing with issues in our national security environment because of a decision taken by the previous Government to neglect the safety and security of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me remind this honourable Senate that since the assumption of office in September 7, 2015, this Government has been ensuring that there exists a number of measures to treat with issues of crime and criminality in Trinidad and Tobago. We have had an increasingly robust and proactive police and other strategic law enforcement presence throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago. We have put in place intelligence gathering measures so that we have intelligence-led operations, both on land and sea, to counteract the illegal flow of arms and ammunition, guns and drugs, as well as monitoring and strengthening the overall border security apparatus.

When one looks, for instance, at the murder rate right now, I can give you

from the statistics taken from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service as of today, as of November 24, in the Western Division, in 2014 there were 50 murders; 2015, 36. In the Eastern Division, 2014, 34; 2015, 26. North Eastern Division, 2014, 45; 2015, 41. Northern Division, 2014, 59; 2015, 55. Tobago, seven, in both 2014 and 2015. Central Division, 45 and 49 respectively. Southern Division, 37 and 42. Port of Spain Division, 75 and 83. South Western Division, 16 and 35. As of to date, in 2014 there were 368 murders. To date, it is 374, a difference of six. By September 2015 there was an increase of about 12 murders comparative to September 2014. We have reduced that to a difference of six and I believe the efforts that we are using right now is going to reduce it considerably by the end of the year.

When we look at the question of firearms seized, and this is based on a concerted effort on instructions from the Minister of National Security in terms of targeting the guns and the areas that have guns based on intelligence gathering operations, to date we have seized 616 firearms. For 2014 the total firearms seized was 586. To date, November 2015 we have surpassed that, the highest ever seizure in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Greater visibility: we have increased greater visibility and deterrent presence by integrated presence of law enforcement: the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, a greater degree of cooperation, a greater degree of operation ability. We have had an integrated and combined law enforcement strategy dealing with sensitive crime operation in critical areas, and you would have seen operations targeted firstly in the south-western area in Point Fortin, Icacos and Cedros area. We have seen operations targeted in the Moruga area, in Enterprise, in Morvant/Laventille, in western, and last week we have seen operations launched in Tobago. So you have seen an

intensified measure of operations, joint police/army operations targeting the areas, targeting the individuals based on intelligence in terms of targeting the guns, and gun-related offences in Trinidad and Tobago at this point in time, Mr. Vice-President. And these operations have borne fruit as evidenced by the seizure of guns and ammunition, and those operations.

As we go forward to 2015, the Government has taken an initiative to adopt the whole of Government approach in which all areas of Government will participate in the fight against crime and criminality in Trinidad and Tobago. There will be a reform and upgrade, modernize and transform the police service utilizing the strength of partnerships. We have already developed the conceptual clarification with respect to community safety partnership where we are going to extend our municipal police organizations. We are going to have consultation in two weeks with the municipalities and the corporations to see how best we can strengthen the corporations, strengthen the municipalities so that they too can contribute, especially in their local areas, to the fight against crime with a new structure that comes under the Commissioner of Police as opposed to the municipalities.

We have in fact reviewed the Strategic Services Agency and the National Operations Centre and we are in effect right now looking at the results of that review, and that will be made known in due course, but you will see a more expanded role for the Strategic Services Agency in the fight against crime and criminality in Trinidad and Tobago. Quite recently, in terms of relationship with our external partners we have had consultations and meetings with our neighbour, Venezuela, with respect to strengthening our cooperative efforts especially in the area of maritime security. That is an area that we feel we are very vulnerable and given our recent assets, our maritime assets it is important for us to share security

information, to share security intelligence and so we have had discussions—

**Mr. Vice-President:** Hon. Minister, you have two minutes.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. E. Dillon:** Thank you, Mr. Vice-President. So we are strengthening both our international and our domestic security environment. We are, of course, looking to see how Venezuela through our cooperation, bilateral cooperation can affect, can relate and can assist us in our security, especially as I said in our maritime security environment. These are just some of the measures that we have adopted and I could say quite clearly we have seen results, especially in terms of our targeted intelligence-led operations between the joint police and army patrols and our targeted areas which will continue as we go into the Christmas season, Mr. Vice-President, and into the Carnival. We will see an increased presence with respect to the Defence Force and Trinidad and Tobago Police Service throughout our shopping areas, throughout our roadways and highways to ensure that the citizenry feel a sense of peace and security by that presence, Mr. Vice-President. I thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 6.40 p.m.*