



13TH NATIONAL YOUTH PARLIAMENT

The Select Committee on Climate Change

Report on

How Can Trinidad and Tobago Better Prepare for the Challenges of Climate Change?

July, 2016

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The Select Committee on Climate Change

Establishment

1. The Select Committee on Climate Change was appointed to solicit the views of the youth nationally on climate change.

Membership

2. The following Members of the 13th Youth Parliament were appointed to serve on the Committee:

Mr. Arnaldo Conliff (Chairman)
Mr. Jabari Lynch (Vice-Chairman)
Ms. Karina Nanan (Member)
Ms. Kassandra George (Member)
Mr. Joshua Ramjohn (Member)
Mr. Kashief Cambell (Member)
Ms. Anaiah Jefferey (Member)
Mr. Kristian Taylor (Member)
Mr. Siddiq Manzano (Member)
Ms. Denisha Ballantyne-Smith

Secretarial Support

3. Secretarial support was provided by Ms. Myesha Saniford, Clerk of the House and Megan Mungalsingh Deputy Clerk of the House, who served as Secretary and Assistant Secretary respectively, to the committee.

1. Introduction

1.1 At the first sitting of the 13th National Youth Parliament held on Monday, November 09, 2015, the Trinidad and Tobago Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) hosted the Thirteenth National Youth Parliamentary Debate in the *Parliament Chamber, Mezzazine Floor, Tower D, The International Waterfront Centre, #1A Wrightson Road, Port-of-Spain*.

1.2 At that sitting a motion entitled “**How Can Trinidad and Tobago Better Prepare for the Challenges of Climate Change?**” was moved by the Prime Minister and Member for Tobago West, Honourable Karina Nanan, MP. The Motion was expounded as follows: -

WHEREAS Trinidad and Tobago as a Small-Island Developing State is vulnerable to adverse effects/impacts of climate change;

AND WHEREAS Trinidad and Tobago’s Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) includes a commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 15% (1.3 million tonnes) by 2030;

AND WHEREAS Trinidad and Tobago intends to embark on the development of a new National Climate Change Policy for the country in 2016;

AND WHEREAS Trinidad and Tobago is the only Caribbean country to have made a commitment to present its INDC at the Conference of Parties (COP21) to be held in Paris in December 2015;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Youth Parliament agree to the appointment of a bi-partisan Committee of Youth Parliamentarians to solicit the views of the youth in this country on climate change;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Committee be mandated to submit its report with findings and recommendations to the National Youth Parliament within six months of its appointment.

1.3 The Motion was approved and subsequently, a committee was established to solicit the views of the youth nationally with respect to climate change, and how this beautiful island of Trinidad and Tobago can be better prepare for the challenges of this global concern.

1.4 In light of the above, the Committee wishes to report in detail.

2. The Report

2.1 Methodology

2.1.1 In order to obtain the views of the youth throughout Trinidad and Tobago, the following methods were utilized by the Committee:

- surveys: questionnaire with open-ended questions;
- semi-structured interviews were conducted amongst students in specific schools and institutions;
- perusal of the National Climate Change Policy of 2011;
- the Internet; and
- perusal of books and newspaper articles on climate change.

2.1.2 The Committee did not meet physically because all Members at the time were studying for the CAPE examinations. Therefore, messages were sent and thoughts conveyed through emails and whatsapp.

2.1.3 With the assistance of some of our teachers, the information was analysed and the report drafted.

2.2 Climate Change

2.2.1 The Committee found that Climate change or global warming is the rise in the Earth's Temperature. It is the greatest threat to human security and civilization and poses an enormous challenge for sustainable development. The planet is warming at an alarming rate, primarily as a result of fossil fuels use, deforestation and other human activity. Left unchecked the thermometer could rise by 6 degrees Celsius this century.

(i) Causes of Climate Change

2.2.2 Some of the major causes of climate change noted by the Committee are -

- the burning of fossil fuels such as oil and coal which emits greenhouse gases into the atmosphere primarily carbon dioxide;
- poor agricultural practices; and
- Deforestation.

(ii) Effects of Climate Change

2.2.3 The Committee also found that Trinidad and Tobago is faced with the biggest environmental challenge ever. Thus, everything will eventually be affected by climate change.

Some of these effects are as follows: -

- Loss of biodiversity (variety of animals and plants) and shifts in biome
- Sea level rise
- Changes in the frequency and intensity of storms
- Melting of glacial and polar icecaps
- Food Security
- Water Security
- Damage to Coastlines/ communities in low lying coastal zones
- Poverty
- Human health
- Human settlement
- Agriculture

2.2.4 After having perused the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Committee noted that the Caribbean region is projected to undergo changes as a result of climate change. These changes are forecasted to expose the Caribbean islands to:

- more intense or frequent disasters or novel ones altogether;
- increased coastal flooding and saltwater intrusion into freshwater aquifers (A major issue in light of sea-level rise);
- heat waves and droughts which have accompanying hazards such as forest fires are predicted to become more commonplace;
- higher rainfall in the wet season and more regular , powerful storms which can exasperate flooding concerns; and
- altered hurricane tracts so that island such as Trinidad and Tobago may be forced to cope more regularly with this natural disasters.

(iii) International Climate Change Policies and Actions

2.2.5 The Committee noted that the threat of climate change is being addressed globally by the United Nations and many other nations have formulated policies and actions to combat changes in the climate. The following are a few of the policies formulated:

- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC);
- The Kyoto Protocol;
- The Bali Action Plan for Mitigation¹ and Adaptation²; and

¹ Mitigation as it relates to climate change is the term generally used to address action related to the abatement or avoidance of greenhouse gas emissions.

² Adaptation is the term generally used for coping mechanisms for the adverse impacts of climate change

- The IPCC (the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) is the main body responsible for assessing the literature on Climate Change.

3. Policy Context

3.1 Research also revealed that Trinidad and Tobago is a ratified signatory to the UNFCCC (1994) and its Kyoto Protocol (1998). The information hereunder was taken from an article by David A Simmons, entitled “*Climate change adaptation and mitigation: Building capacity in T&T*”, published in the Trinidad Guardian June 14 2015. This articles gives a clear indication of where the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) is presently at with respect to climate change. To quote:

“The Cabinet of the GORTT, in 2012, approved a National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) which provides a blue print for integrating elements of the NCCP into existing and proposed sectoral policies, and providing a vehicle through which climate change adaptation and mitigation can be integrated into the national planning process.

The GORTT also approved the National Forest Policy and the National Protective Areas Policy; both of which have clear synergies and reinforce each other’s core objectives toward more sustainable development, such as protecting biodiversity and genetic heritage, and maintaining ecosystem services while sustaining livelihoods. Cabinet has also appointed a Ministerial Committee (12 ministries) which is chaired by the minister in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources to have oversight of the implementation of the NCCP.

T&T, with a relatively sizeable industrial sector, has participated in a number of regional and international initiatives and implemented various policy and legislative instruments,

all in an effort to achieve the goals of low carbon growth and sustainable development. Some notable examples include: the Certificate of Environmental Clearance Rules (2001), the Renewable Energy Policy Framework (2011), the Planning and Facilitation of Development Bill (2013) and the Air Pollution Rules (2015).

The country has also undertaken several projects by various entities in the public and private sector and civil society and in partnership with local, regional and international agencies.

Some of the notable projects include:

- The National Restoration, Carbon Sequestration, wildlife and Livelihoods Project (2010-2017)*
- The Mainstreaming of Climate Change into National Development and Capacity Building for Participation into Carbon Markets (2011-2013);*
- The Low Emissions Capacity Building Program (2011–2016);*
- The Piloting the integration of coastal zone management and climate change adaptation in Tobago (2012-2014);*
- The Elaboration of a Strategy for the Reduction of Carbon Emissions in Trinidad and Tobago (2013-2015); and*
- The Wind Resource Assessment Project (2013–2015);*

The EMA, through the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, obtained a technical assistant grant from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to undertake the “Institutional Strengthening of the Environmental Management Authority in Relation to Climate Change.”

The objective of this project is to undertake a review of policies, primary legislation (in force or proposed), and regulations pertaining to environmental management and sustainable development and propose amendments to these policies, legislations and regulations in order to satisfy the mitigation and adaptation directives and strategies contained in the NCCP, Forests and Protected Areas policies.

Another initiative tied to this IDB-funded project is the institutional strengthening of the EMA which is aimed at enhancing the capacity of the EMA to fully perform its legally mandated co-ordinating role—to mainstream the priorities set forth by climate change into environment and natural resources management in the context of all development sectors.

The Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards is also an active participant in fighting the problem of Climate Change. The division in 2014 coordinated with the National Mirror Committee to develop and adopt key International Standards including ISO14001 (Environmental Management) and ISO 14064 (greenhouse gas management). By adopting ISO 14001 nationally, and managing a related certification programme over many years, TTBS has greatly promoted the benefits of the standard for controlling energy consumption and environmental impacts. TTBS also hosted a national stakeholder workshop on ISO 50001 (energy management) to build awareness of the benefits of this standard³.”

³ Camille Toolsie. “A Small Island Coping with Climate Change- Trinidad and Tobago. www.iso.org/iso/news.htm? Published June 2014

4. Implications for the Youth of Trinidad & Tobago

4.1 Statistics indicate the magnitude of the impact of climate change in the next decade will be colossal; 175 million children will be affected, the elderly, homeless, disabled persons with respiratory diseases, girls and women are among the most vulnerable⁴, 88 percent of adolescents (10-19 years old) living in developing countries, children and women represent 65 percent of those who will be affected by climate –related disasters.⁵ Clearly the implication of climate change on youths are alarming. The youth of today are tomorrow’s leaders, politicians, policy makers, decision makers and inventors. It is necessary then to secure out youth as they are one of the most vulnerable groups.

4.2 However, the Committee found that the role of the youth then becomes critical in creating an environmentally conscious society. Based on qualitative research, and conducting interviews with various subject teachers at early childhood, primary and secondary levels, it was found that the youth in Trinidad and Tobago have limited knowledge about the cause, effects and implications of climate change. As a result of lack of awareness, the youths are not doing all that they can in preparation for the challenges ahead.

4.3 Students doing Geography , Environmental Sciences, Biology and Social Studies (but in limited capacity) were found to be more aware of the phenomenon but still did not fully comprehend the seriousness and severity of the threat that climate change posed to this country and by extension the world. Students at the Secondary level still cannot properly identify risk, local

⁴ Save the Children Fund, Legacy of Disaster, SCF, Sweden and UK 2007

⁵ Bartlette, Sheridan, “Climate Change and Urban Children: Impacts & Implications for Adoption in Low and Middle Income Countries; International Institute for Environmental & Development, London , 2008

threats and vulnerabilities and their relationships. Moreover they cannot understand fully the impact of social norms and collective behavior on environmental risk and protection.

4.4 At the primary level, students have basic concepts of climate change and the importance of natural resources for daily life but little or no concepts about the consequences in the future for their actions now on the local environment.

4.5 At the pre-school level, students seem to have a better understanding of their role in keeping the environment clean as opposed to the importance of the environment.

4.6 On all three tiers of the Education system, there is the need for students to better understand how to identify risk and develop disaster management preparedness skills in their local environment.

4.7 Based on the above findings, education and awareness are key to solving the problem. This will be discussed below.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The IPCC in its fourth Assessment Report concluded that only immediate and sustained action will stop climate change from causing irreversible and potentially catastrophic damage to the environment.

5.2 The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Article 6) and the Kyoto Protocol (Article 10) both encourage governments to **Educate, Empower** and **Engage** all

stakeholders and major groups on climate change policies, indicating the indispensable role of education in achieving sustainable development⁶.

5.3 In light of the foregoing and in order to effectively address the challenges of climate change or in the wider context global warming, Trinidad and Tobago must significantly reduce the amount of heat-trapping emissions it is putting into the atmosphere.

5.4 The Committee posits that each person can assist by taking action to reduce their personal carbon emissions. But, there is still warranted a plan to fully address this threat of climate change which can devastate our planet - earth. Thus, there must be a demand for action from our elected leaders to support and implement a comprehensive set of climate solutions.

5.5 In consequence, the Committee proffers the following recommendations, it trusts will aid Trinidad and Tobago to deal with this phenomenon:

(i) *Educate, Empower and Engage*

- by facilitating access to information on climate change is critical to winning public support for climate related policies. There is therefore a need for more public consultation as the GORTT bring forth new policies pertaining to the Environment and Climate Change.
- by borrowing from the Germans, if the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago are required to pay for garbage collection, they will become more conscious of what they throw away and how much they throw away. In short a policy such as this may truly encourage citizens.

⁶ http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/CFS_Climate_E_web.pdf

- the Ministry of education can embark on a number of policies to engage the Youth on Climate Change.
- by pushing for the teaching of Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) with Fidelity. HFLE has an entire component geared towards the environment and it builds positive values, life skills, human rights and psychosocial competencies while simultaneously causing them to develop critical thinking. According to UNICEF's School's Manual on Climate Change and Environmental Education, "A life skills based approach will offer Goals that reflect the rights of children in the context of their community including risk and protective factors in the environment. The life skill approach will serve to build children's resilience to local environment risk and promote positive attitudes regarding environmental stewardship and sustainable consumption.
- by setting up training programmes for teachers that cover climate change, environmental education and sustainable development while ensuring that there is activity based learning, interactive teaching methodologies and teachers as learning facilitators.
- through a holistic approach - the Curricula on all levels can be infused with lessons or modules on climate change. This will prove even more efficient.
- by the Ministry of Education eliciting the assistance of UNICEF to develop a Climate Change Toolkit for students and teachers that suits our cultural context.

(ii) ***Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.***

➤ As was mentioned earlier, Trinidad and Tobago has been responsibly trying to fulfill their Mandate with respect to the Environment. The Creation of the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) in a clear step in that direction and the development of Air Pollution Rules and Water Pollution Rules which seeks to reduce our Carbon Footprint is another proactive move on the part of GORTT. However, there is need:

- to enforce the existing laws governing the environment. The laws exist, but there is need for the legislation to be actively used;
- for the EMA to become more forceful in carrying out its duties;
- by the creation of an Environmental Inspectorate under the EMA to carry out surveillance, gather intelligence and with powers of charging members of the public for crimes against the environment. As it is the EMA waits for complaints. They must actively pursue matters and become more forceful;
- to minimize waste at the production, distribution, consumption and disposal stages AND to recycle;
- to improve organic waste collection, utilization and storage systems; improving waste-water treatment;
- to regulate and control excessive disposal of waste products in urban areas and the drafting and implementing policies that will encourage recycling.

(iii) *Agriculture*

- the GORTT should significantly increase the allocation of funds to the Agricultural sector to educate farmers on proper Agricultural practices that are environmentally friendly;
- improve farm management practices;
- promote reforestation projects and thus reduce deforestation and its associated global warming emissions;
- improve water management through soil aeration and periodic drainage of paddy fields; adopt intermittent irrigation systems to ensure high yield of crops;
- improve cattle management practices; expanding pasture and forage conservation for dry-season feeding by improving collection, use and storage of organic waste.
- by drafting and implementing an effective and efficient land-use policy.

(iv) *Setting up a Youth Forum*

- A Youth Forum should be set up to get the message across about the challenges of climate change. This will help to educate and raise awareness. The Ministry of education in conjunction with other Ministries, Organizations such as EMA & ODPM and public stakeholders (CBOs, NGOs, FBOs) and Industries can work together to help disseminate information to youths, to influence and enhance their knowledge to face the environmental challenges ahead.

(v) ***Energy***

- expand the use of renewable energy and transform our energy system to one that is cleaner and less dependent on fossil fuels;
- increase and diversify Energy Supply: we can improve energy efficiency and conserve it by simply reducing the amount of energy used in our homes and workplaces through the use of the following renewable energy sources such as:
 - energy efficient light bulbs and energy star products which do not release CFC gases into the atmosphere;
 - solar panels, solar water heaters, fittings, bulbs, etc.
 - windmills for the generation of electricity;
- build a clean energy economy by investing in efficient energy technologies, industries and other approaches;
- increase vehicle fuel efficiency and support other solutions that reduce oil use in Trinidad and Tobago; and
- place limits on the amount of carbon that polluters are allowed to emit.

6. Conclusion

Climate change is not only a major issue in Trinidad and Tobago but it's a global issue, for which robust action and leadership is critical, toward reducing the challenges nationally. It should be noted that to address the challenges of this phenomenon, policy makers together with experts on climate change must draft and implement effective policies, laws and rules.

The Committee posits that as citizens of this country can contribute to protecting our climate. As mentioned above, a set of smart, practical policies is required. Thus, taking climate action now to curb climate change can result in significant economic benefits Trinidad and Tobago.

The Committee therefore, respectfully submits its report for consideration by the National Youth Parliament.

Arnaldo Conliff
Chairman