

*For Immediate Release*

## **T&T civil society calls on government and international development community to ally with them to deliver 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda locally**

**Joint statement from SDGs Catalysts Network and wider civil society in Trinidad & Tobago**

*Issued by: The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute<sup>1</sup>*

**Trinidad and Tobago, July 9, 2018** – Meaningful and active participation of all sectors of society is needed for the [2030 Sustainable Development Agenda](#) to be truly transformative. Endorsed by 193 countries worldwide, the Agenda is a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity - it is characterised by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which form a cohesive and integrated package of global aspirations the world commits to achieving by 2030. Partnerships are thus recognised as critical to balancing the three dimensions of economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion, needed to achieve sustainable development, including a role for civil society.

Under the [CSOs4GoodGov](#) project (2017-2020) being supported by the European Union, leading civil society organisations (CSOs) in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) have formed the *SDGs Catalysts Network*<sup>2</sup> to support their effective participation and engagement in local implementation of the SDGs, in partnership with Government and other stakeholders.

We recognise the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2018, which focuses on "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies" and an in-depth look at (among others) Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals. This statement by the SDGs Catalysts Network and members of wider civil society in T&T, signals our intention to remain an active partner in development, implementation, monitoring and reporting on the national agenda for SDGs in our country. This includes recognising and promoting the SDGs through our work; reporting on activities in support of the Goals; engaging in joint advocacy and collective action; and holding government accountable for action toward achieving the Goals.

### **Statement**

#### **Civil society is implementing the SDGs in T&T**

**Civil society in Trinidad and Tobago is taking definitive action and accelerating its efforts to effectively contribute and deliver on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** - Since launching in September 2017, the *Catalysts* have started the movement to engage CSOs in their respective sectors and other CSO networks, catalyse joint action and amplify civil society's voice on the

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<sup>1</sup> CANARI is convener for the SDGs Catalysts Network.

<sup>2</sup> The SDGs Catalysts Network is an informal network of 20-25 leading CSOs working across sectors in T&T to address the full range of development priorities encompassed by the 17 SDGs (e.g. environment, poverty, inequality, gender, youth, health, education, social and community development, culture and heritage etc.), with some CSOs working across several goals. The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) functions as convener of the SDGs Catalysts Network and provides technical support to support its operation

SDGs. It is clear from early [mapping of initiatives](#) that civil society is already delivering results on the SDGs and has a number of lessons to share.



*The SDGs Catalysts Network with the Ambassador of the European Union which is supporting the work by civil society*

**Civil society is collaborating for a stronger voice** - Civil society in T&T sees value in building and strengthening relationships to ensure healthy collaboration and ensuring that civil society voices are heard in national development processes. A key part of the vision for civil society is working more effectively for collective advocacy and action. Identifying common interests and opportunities and building strong relationships and coalitions among civil society actors is key. We believe the CSO sector can become a model for collaboration, engagement and innovative advocacy, with the SDGs as the foundation.

**Civil society is delivering development results on the ground** - Civil society in T&T is concerned about performance on delivering the SDGs in T&T and wants to be involved in delivering results. Our work on the ground enables us to provide our government with best practices and perspectives on local realities that need to be seen and heard at the policy level. Civil society is also well suited to help translate the SDGs into the daily life of communities through practical on-the-ground actions and boost sensitisation on the importance of an integrated approach to sustainable development.

**Civil society is willing to work with Government, the private sector and other development partners to promote positive change and deliver together for development** - Civil society is looking forward to participating in any national mechanisms and processes moving forward, and has positioned itself to do so, with the coming together of leading CSOs in the #SDGsCatalystsNetwork in Trinidad and Tobago. Civil society will be able to contribute more cohesively and efficiently as implementers of, advocates and watchdogs for the SDGs.

### Civil society priorities for sustainable development in T&T

Although the Government of T&T has not yet made a voluntary report to the United Nations, the SDGs Catalysts Network is reviewing what global assessments and report cards are showing as critical gaps in sustainable development in T&T.

The SDGs Catalysts Network has worked with wider civil society and has identified some emerging priorities for achieving sustainable development in T&T.

- **A rights-based approach to development is critical:** Civil society in T&T recognises that human rights is central to sustainable development. Civil society needs to work toward a cohesive position on the human rights agenda and collaborate and coordinate on advocacy for the different rights. SDGs already provide an integrated framework for advancing the human rights agenda and opportunity for mainstreaming human rights in development to ensure a more inclusive approach so that we *'leave no-one behind'*.
- **Local development is critical to sustainable development:** Localising the SDGs means asking 'do the means of implementation include civil society?' Civil society as a key local actor needs to be empowered to channel global goals into local actions and can contribute to ensuring others in government and private sector are aware and begin mainstreaming SDGs in local development priorities and in communities. This will make for a more holistic approach to development, as is envisioned under the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
- **More action is needed on goals to protect the planet (SDGs 7, 13,14,15):** Environmental pressures on our planet are increasing and the high vulnerability of small island developing states (SIDS) and T&T's own SIDS status requires we play our part to protect it. In the context of climate change and ongoing degradation ecosystems critical to our survival, we call for more opportunities for engagement and greater involvement of civil society (including women, youth, indigenous peoples and local communities) in coordinated action on this front.

#### **A call to action: Nothing about us, without us!**

Our collective success in furthering the well-being of people and the planet and ensuring transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies for all is dependent on SDGs addressed in an all-inclusive manner. The SDGs Catalysts Network and members of wider civil society in T&T are paying attention and demonstrating clear interest in being active partners in this process.



**We therefore call on the government and the international community:**

- **To recognise the contribution being made by civil society to delivering the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in T&T.**
- **To practice more participatory approaches to implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda which involve partnering with civil society and local communities in T&T.**
- **To ensure that civil society is guaranteed an active role in national decision-making on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, including a role in deciding on priorities and monitoring implementation.**
- **To offer the support civil society needs to serve as a critical partner in sustainable development in T&T.**

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**About the project:** The [CSOsForGoodGov](#) project is spearheaded by a consortium of seven<sup>3</sup> leading civil society organisations (CSOs) in Trinidad and Tobago. The main objective of the project is enhancing civil society's contribution to governance and development processes in T&T and specifically, to support the effective involvement of CSOs in national implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the heart of the effort to do this, the project consortium convened and officially launched the SDGs Catalysts Network in September 2017. CANARI is serving as convener and coordinating activities of the Network under the *CSOsForGoodGov* project.

**About CANARI:** The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) is a regional technical non-profit organisation which has been working in the islands of the Caribbean for more than 25 years. Our mission is to promote equitable participation and effective collaboration in managing natural resources critical to development. Our programmes focus on capacity building, policy planning and development, research, sharing and dissemination of lessons learned, and fostering regional partnerships. See here for more information on CANARI: <http://www.canari.org/>.

**Connect with us:**



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<sup>3</sup> Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI), Environment Tobago (ET), Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women, United Way Trinidad and Tobago (UWTT) (which is project lead), University of the West Indies-Institute for Gender and Development Studies (UWI-IGDS), Veni Apwann (VA) and Women's Institute for Alternative Development (WINAD).