

**Address by Prime Minister**  
**The Honourable Patrick Manning**  
*Ministry of Finance Shareholder's Breakfast Meeting*  
**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2008**

*Thank you very much madam. Mistress of Ceremony, Honourable Karen Tesheira, Minister of Finance, very distinguished Governor of the Central Bank, Mr. Ewart Williams, our Chairman of the Heritage and Stabilisation fund Mr. Sam Martin and the CEO of the SEC, Mr. Nurse, distinguished captains of the financial community, ladies and gentlemen. I have one to deal with at home, and in addition to that one I have seven more in the Cabinet. They are very persuasive my dear friends and as a result of which I find myself having to say a few words to you this morning. You really don't know the trouble that I see, but I am very pleased indeed to be here and to be associated with this update that is taking place in relation to our International Financial Centre.*

*This year, Trinidad and Tobago celebrates a hundred years of commercial oil production in fact, oil exports and for as long as we've had an oil industry, fears have been expressed about our overdependence on that industry. The earliest recorded version of that was in somewhere in 1905 many, many years before and just yesterday when we had a meeting of the Standing Committee and Energy, it came to our attention that this reserve to production ratio that seems to consume so many these days was in 1963, arising out of the Commission of Enquiry recorded at about ten, it was ten in 1963 which on the base of interpretation some would like to put on it suggested that by 1973 our oil industry*

*should have been no more but today it is now twelve, which means you have to put the proper construction on it.*

*Even so, my dear friends, even so, we are not unaware of the fact that our oil and gas resources are wasting assets, and even as we enjoy high oil prices and gas prices in the national community, and even as we enjoy the revenues that will afford us and the increasingly ambitious nature of our development programme as a consequence, we are forever mindful of the fact that there is a limit that one ought to place on reliance on an asset that is finite in nature and wasting. And so, ladies and gentlemen, for some time now we have been looking for alternatives to the energy sector, not that we believe it is a curse to have been blessed with supplies of oil and gas, far from that, we'll use what we have, but even as we do that we believe it is incumbent on us to also find alternative sources of finance and revenues against the possibility that sometime, and we know it will be the distant future, oil and gas resources run out.*

*The Government has identified as part of the diversification effort, seven new industries on which we will rely very heavily for diversification. I think you know what they are it is printing and packaging, food and beverage, yachting, merchant marine, film processing and so on, seven of them in all but even as we do that, we were not unmindful of the developments that were taking place in the financial sector where, almost as a consequence of the success of our economy, and the extent to which business activity is being stimulated here, a number of countries and companies have come to Trinidad and Tobago seeking to borrow on the domestic market and that whether we liked it or not, we began to emerge*

*as a financial centre. What the Government of Trinidad and Tobago decided to do therefore was to build on that natural tendency and our strengths and to formally develop an International Financial Centre along similar lines to the more successful ones in the world and the one that has been pointed out in great measure this morning was Dubai.*

*When the idea was first noted I remember saying to someone, in fact I think it was addressing an audience similar to this, I said that we were seeking to compete with New York, and of course I heard the chuckle in the audience, I heard the chuckle, and there are always those who feel that when you say things like that you don't know what you're saying. Well, of course I was accused of that again, but my dear friends, we take one look at the fact that we are in the same time zone with New York, and you take note of the fact that increasingly it is becoming difficult to take money in and take money out of the United States in the context of the drug trade, and as these restrictions are placed in the US, a number of the companies that operate in the financial sector in the US have begun to look outside of US borders to see what the opportunities are for relocation and that's a fact. It's a fact of life that Trinidad and Tobago is seeking to be on the ground floor of that particular move. At the same time, we are not unaware that other countries in the Caribbean have been looking. I don't want to name any but other countries in the Caribbean have been looking and thinking in the same directions, but we know that we have a major headstart in that regard.*

*The recent visit of the Minister of Finance and her delegation to Dubai also indicates to us that the IFC in Dubai has been looking for a partner in the*

*Western hemisphere and that already they have examined a number of IFCs that are emerging and have rejected partnering with them on a number of grounds. In one case there was a private sector organisation whereas they were looking to partner with a public sector one. In several other cases they found the vision of the IFC was not as broad and consistent with their own thinking as they would have liked and therefore they thought it would have been too restrictive. In some other instances they thought that the regulatory framework was not the kind of framework in which they would wish to operate but that whereas they examined Trinidad and Tobago, they began to see more and more that Trinidad and Tobago appeared to be a natural fit for partnership in the Western hemisphere and even before the Minister of Finance arrived in Dubai, they began to think in those directions, concretised by that visit which, I must say, has been extremely successful indeed.*

*And so my dear friends, we move on to an IFC. At the end of the day we know that it is one thing to have an active economy and vibrant one, it is one thing to be able to generate a lot of financial resources so that people could borrow on your market but in the final analysis, investors will come to a country like Trinidad and Tobago largely because we are stable, stable democracy in the Western hemisphere, we speak English, which is one of the good legacies of colonialism, we follow a British system of jurisprudence, and we are not prone to some of the wild adventurism of some countries where they seek to gain assets by expropriation. The government of Trinidad and Tobago is not noted for any such thing and these are the issues, these are the things that have acted as a firm*

*base, it is stable government and these are the things that have caused a number of companies to be looking at us again and to be slowly but surely committing themselves to investing here and in the International Finance Centre. I think it would be appropriate too if I join the Minister in Finance in congratulating Mr. Ram Ramesh, that was the man who started much of this. I think the first letter was written by him and he spearheaded it as the Minister pointed out in Phases One and Two. I think that we ought to record our appreciation to him in this regard.*

*As we move forward ladies and gentlemen, the one thing that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago knows is this: what a country and a people are able to achieve would be limited only by the vision of its leaders, and if the leaders have a restricted vision of what is possible, then that is what they will achieve. If, on the other hand, the leaders possess a breadth of vision then the possibilities that are open to the country are virtually endless and what you achieve then is what you set out and what you are determined to work towards achieving. We come with a very broad vision on this and other matters, to the point where some people believe that we are unrealistic but time will tell, my dear friends, where the truth lies. We do not believe that at all, we believe Trinidad and Tobago has a tremendous amount of possibilities in a number of respects and it is our determination to exploit these possibilities to the fullest extent. At the end of the day it is not just the question of an IFC or an IFC for the sake of an IFC or economic activity for the sake of economic activity my dear friends. The objective of all of us has to be a better life for as many people, as many citizens of Trinidad*

*and Tobago in the shortest possible time. It is my pleasure to endorse this initiative.*

*God bless you all.*