



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On the Occasions of International Women's Day, March 8, 2024
and
International Day of Women's Judges, March 10, 2024



The United Nations Women's theme for International Women's Day 2024, is **'Invest in women: Accelerate progress.'** Despite the significant advancements women have achieved in gender equality, there remains a substantial gap that needs to be bridged. Issues in the workplace such as pay inequity, unfavourable conditions of work, unequal opportunities for promotion and upward mobility, sexual harassment, part-time, contract and temporary work as well as greater protection for domestic workers and vulnerable workers in general, are still in need of redress. According to UN Women, the global champion for gender equality, an additional \$360 billion is needed per year to achieve gender equality; closing gender gaps in employment could boost GDP per capita by 20 per cent and closing gaps in care and expanding services with decent jobs could spark almost 300 million jobs by 2035. Women in conflict, disaster and other fragile environments are particularly at risk, and credit should be given to organisations like the International Labour Organization and civil society groups which lend crucial support to these women, our sisters.

In spite of the challenges and obstacles many women continue to face, there is much to celebrate. In our own country, a number of top offices are held by women, foremost among them is the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Her Excellency Christine Carla Kangaloo, ORTT. The office of Speaker of the House of Representatives is held by the Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, MP and in February 2023, this country welcomed its first female Commissioner of Police, Mrs. Erla Harewood-Christopher.

At the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago, women comprise roughly eighty-two percent of the complement of staff, with sixty-seven percent occupying key managerial and supervisory positions. More and more female practitioners, including representatives of the Trade Union movement and employer's organisations, appear before the Court to represent workers.

Tremendous progress has been made in the appointment of women judges to the Industrial Court. The first woman judge, Her Honour Mrs. Cynthia Riley-Haynes, was appointed in 1980, fifteen years after the establishment of the Industrial Court. She remained the sole woman judge for nearly six years until another was appointed. Today, eleven of our twenty-four judges are women. In 2011, the Court welcomed the first female President, Her Honour Mrs. Deborah Thomas-Felix, after more than four decades of the Court's existence. Women have served in other top offices at the Court, including the late Her Honour Mrs. Gladys Gafoor, who served as Vice-President, and the Honourable Mme Justice Joye Donaldson - Honeywell, who served as Chairman of the Essential Services Division before joining the Supreme Court. The Industrial Court owes a debt of gratitude to our past and present Women Judges, all of whom have contributed significantly and continue to contribute to the development of the Court's jurisprudence.

I take this opportunity to celebrate all women in Trinidad and Tobago and to recognise their contribution to our society in all fields of endeavour, including our homemakers and caregivers.

Her Honour Mrs. Heather Seale
President, Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago