

 <p>The Interclub of Trinidad & Tobago</p>	<p><i>Members:</i></p> <p><i>African Women's Club</i> <i>American Women's Club</i></p> <p><i>Brahma Kumaris Women's Group</i> <i>Indian Women's Group</i></p> <p><i>Inner Wheel of St. Augustine</i> <i>Multi- Cultural Club of T & T</i></p> <p><i>National Muslim Women's Group</i> <i>Petroleum Women's Club</i></p> <p><i>Soroptimist International St Augustine</i> <i>Venezuelan Centre</i></p> <p><i>Syrian/Lebanese Women's Club</i> <i>U.K. Women's Club</i></p> <p><i>Women's Organization for the Underprivileged</i></p>
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Salutations:

Her Excellency, Dr. Jean Ramjohn-Richards, the First Lady of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago,

The Honourable Prime Minister Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the First Female Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministers of Government and Members of the Opposition

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Mayor of San Fernando

Presidents and Executive of Member Clubs

Sponsors Members of the Media

And all other distinguished ladies and gentlemen. Good Morning.

I extend a warm welcome to you all and congratulate you on the excellent attendance at this special celebration of the anniversary of International Women's Day. Yes! On March 8th we celebrate one hundred years of the recognition of Women all over the World! Don't you think that this is an enormous cause for celebration? It should also be a day for reflection, particularly as we take cognizance of the **United Nations theme for International Women's Day 2011: "equal access to education, training and science and technology: pathway to decent work for a woman."**

These are powerful and challenging words for all of us. It is also a golden opportunity for us to raise the profile of our organisations and be exemplars to the rest of our nation in our total commitment to the cause of women's advancement.

Despite much progress, millions of children still lack access to education and all its benefits. Girls are still at a disadvantage and some of the statistics show that much work is still required to achieve **Education for all by 2015.** Approximately 776 million adults lack literacy skills; 16% of the world's population and two thirds of these are women.

Here in Trinidad and Tobago, we can also celebrate our successes in Education, for example, our girls continue to out -perform our boys in almost all the major examinations. However, we still have a lot of work to do. What can we, in our associations' do, to treat with school drop-outs, teenage pregnancies, young girls in abusive relationships, and some much too gruesome to mention?

Let us focus on the root causes and seek to develop strategies and programmes to educate these groups of girls/women. Let us continue to work on the critical

issues, collaborating on the more challenging ones that have serious implications for the future of women in our society.

I applaud the work done by all the organisations represented in this room. I urge you to ensure that our government is aware of this work and please continue to press for the necessary changes in policy and governance to ensure Education for all by 2015.

Education is the soul of any society and it passes from one generation to another. Women and girls and indeed all of society are eagerly waiting for us and the work that we do. **My wish for each of you and your organisation is that you make a decision to intentionally do the IMPORTANT work that needs to be done, because resources around the world are going to be more precious as we face the challenges of economic recession.**

This is a golden opportunity for the more educated women in society to assertively stand up and proudly present what they have been able to achieve. Be the role model that our young women need –encourage them to use the internet and research information as this is now the ‘super highway’ to knowledge. Having said this, **I urge you too;** to become knowledgeable in using the new media for it is via these new modes of communication (Facebook, You Tube, Twitter and BlackBerry Messenger (BBM)) that we will keep the lines of communication open with our youth!

As we celebrate International Women’s Day, let us encourage each other and our young women, to become more assertive and to realize that despite cultural and economic obstacles, women have managed to pursue their aspirations and reach the pinnacle of success. **Encourage them to commit themselves to lifelong**

learning, for education remains the most valuable investment they will ever make and cannot ever lose.

I wish to end by quoting from my mentor, Dr. Nesta Patrick - when she received her honorary doctorate. She advised those present in 2001 *and these words are more relevant today*:

- **To Look carefully at what is taking place around us;**
- **To Listen with interest and concern about what is happening around us;**
- **To Learn from the experiences around us, and to keep learning every minute of the day, making use of this knowledge, and finally,**
- **To Love through sharing and understanding to all those who are part of our space on this planet, and to enjoy and help others enjoy their time with us.**

I thank you and wish you a very fruitful and blessed International Women's Day.

Chairperson:

Suzanne Roach (Soroptimist International of St. Augustine)

March 1 2011