



PM talks women's issues at UN

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New York—Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister, Kamla Persad Bissessar spoke at the Women's Political Participation at the United Nations on Monday. In her opening remarks, she called for greater global involvement of women in the political process. Using her political ascendancy as an example of "courage, commitment, and conviction," she challenged governments to honour their responsibilities to build an equitable world where women are empowered.

"I urge everyone to summon the political and the financial will to honour our commitments. We must ensure that our generation leaves a legacy of 50 per cent of women in political and other spheres of decision-making, and delivers tangible policies and action programmes aimed at improving the lives of women and girls," she told the packed conference. Citing the Chinese proverb that "Women hold up half of the sky," Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar said she envisioned a world where women comprised "half of our legislature, half of our local governments and half of our state boards and private sector board rooms."

She expressed her determination to level the playing field with the newly created Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development and her intention to introduce what she called "gender-responsive budgets and gender responsive national development planning" aimed at achieving gender equality. She also advocated mentoring initiatives for young women to become more attuned to the political process. "Such programmes will identify and encourage women to stand as candidates—locally and nationally," she noted.

Prime Minister Kamla Persad Bissessar was joined by more than 20 high-level political representatives, including Dilma Rousseff, President of Brazil; Roza Otunbayeva, President of the Kyrgyz Republic; Dr Lilia Labidi, Minister of Women's Affairs, Republic of Tunisia; Hilary Clinton, US Secretary of State, and Michelle Bachelet, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director, UN Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women. The event was organised by the United States, UN Women, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, the EU, and the UNDP.

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