Conflict Women
Statement on the Pre-UPR Session on Trinidad and Tobago
27 August, 2026 Geneva

(SLIDE 1)
This statement is delivered on behalf of Conflict Women, a civil society organization in Trinidad and Tobago that seeks to financially empower rape and domestic violence survivors and provide them with livelihood and legal services. Conflict Women is part of the Alliance for State Action to End Gender-Based Violence and has consulted with key stakeholders from non-governmental organizations and governments in preparing this submission, which focuses on violence against women and the advancement of women.

(SLIDE 2)
ISSUE 1: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Botswana recommended for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to *"Prioritize access to shelters, medical services, legal aid and counselling services for women exiting domestic violence situations."*

Brazil recommended for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to *"Strengthen measures to combat violence against women by creating specialized police units to investigate these crimes and mitigate impunity."*

Germany recommended that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago *"address the problem of gender-based violence and fully implement the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act, 2020, and thereby guarantee that particularly vulnerable migrant women have access to gender-based violence services and are protected from trafficking."*

Following national elections held on April 28, 2025, and the return to office of Kamla Persad-Bissessar, who had held the office of Prime Minister from 2010 to 2015, the Gender Affairs and Child Affairs Divisions were moved from the Office of the Prime Minister to the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services. This resulted in a decrease of resources and the non-renewal of the majority of staff contracts ***(1).***

Since the last UPR, the National Strategic Action Plan to End Gender-Based and Sexual Violence was approved and a safe shelter for women and their dependents was constructed. The authorities continued provision of a National Domestic Violence hotline 800-SAVE through the Gender Affairs Division, which was an integral part under the umbrella of the Office of the Prime Minister ***(2).*** However, safe shelters are still insufficient to match needs with 4 shelters out of 14 being reported closed in 2020 due to a lack of funding and government subventions despite the troubling statistic that 1 in 3 women experiences violence according to the Women's Health Survey (2017) ***(3)***. It is therefore a matter of deep concern that between 2020 and the present additional

shelters have closed, with only 8 shelters operational, 7 led by NGOs and 1 by Government. The dedicated Domestic Violence hotline was physically relocated from the capital city of Port-of-Spain to a residential rural community called Couva and no longer operates on a 24 hour cycle due to the non-renewal of numerous listener contracts ***(4)***.

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The Special Victims Department of the TTPS provides a new umbrella framework for the operations of the Gender-Based Violence Unit, the Child Protection Unit and the Sexual Offences Unit offering "a coordinated, victim-centred, and trauma informed response to the rising national concern surrounding domestic abuse, sexual offences, child abuse, and other related crimes" ***(5).*** Notably, despite progress made through this department with an increase in DV reports to the TTPS from 2022-2024,the actual number of charges laid for offenses decreased. Furthermore,

- Breach of protection order reports increased by 32% **(*6*)**. Charges decreased by 37% ***(7).***
- Assault by beating reports increased by 32% ***(8)***. Charges decreased by 91% ***(9).***
- Total number of DV reports increased by 51% (***10).*** Charges decreased by 65% ***(11).***

Increasing incidence of femicides: Between 2022-2024, the TTPS saw a 27% increase in homicide reports ***(12)*** with "over a dozen women murdered in Trinidad and Tobago from January 1 to April 8, 2026.." (***13)***.

(SLIDE 4)

While reports have increased, charges have not. Femicides have also become prevalent, prompting the following recommendations to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago:

- Reinstate a Ministry of Gender & Child affairs, with a designated Minister, Permanent Secretary, and an adequate budget.

- Adequately fund shelters, that include migrant women and victims of trafficking, ensuring that these shelters are financially sustainable with trained staff and measures in place for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and the provision of realistic strategies for women to transition into stable living environments after leaving

- Increase resources, staffing, GBV training, and partnerships for the TTPS' Special Victims Department and the Community Mediation Services Division adopting a survivor-centric approach, in accordance with the Victims Rights Act of June 2026, ensuring that the well-being, protection, and dignity of survivors is

prioritized

- Creating a specialized GBV court to expedite processing, reduce femicides, and reduce the further violence/victimization of survivors of sexual abuse.

- Establish a specialized government website for GBV survivors, providing assistance with: protection, psychosocial support, skills training, job placement, legal support, and safe houses, utilising the UN's Catalogue of Services for the Economic Empowerment of Women as a resource.

(SLIDE 5)

ISSUE 2: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Spain recommended that the Trinidad and Tobago Government *"implement a National Gender Policy and Action Plan endowed with sufficient resources to combat sexual and gender-based violence"*

Pakistan recommended that the Trinidad and Tobago Government *"continue with efforts to promote gender parity and enhance women's participation in the political, economic and social spheres."*

Denmark recommended that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago *"amend its legislation in order to legalize the termination of pregnancies in cases of risk to the life of the pregnant woman, rape, incest and severe impairment of the fetus."*

However, recent developments are as follows:

- With the coming to office of a female Prime Minister in 2025 and the appointment of a female Leader of Opposition it is to be noted that Trinidad and Tobago experienced an unprecedented situation in which the three (3) top offices of state are held by women. Nevertheless, of all the Members of Parliament, less than a quarter of all members, including in the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Trinidad & Tobago Parliament are women ***(14)***.

- Further, according to the World Bank, "women's legal rights in Trinidad & Tobago were being enforced at only one-third of their full potential (37%)" ***(15)*** with "less than half of all supportive frameworks needed to support the implementation of women's economic rights at work in place (49%)", according to 2026 data ***(16)***.

- This notwithstanding, in 2025, Trinidad and Tobago became the first country in the Caribbean to create and launch a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. This plan focuses on gun violence, organised crime, and gender-based violence ***(17)***.

- In 2026, less than a quarter of all rape, incest, and sexual crimes reported to TTPS were detected (24.2%) ***(18)*** and in 2023, the TTPS received the highest number of DV reports that they'd seen in 15 years ***(19)***.

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We therefore recommend that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago:

- Update and formalize the National Policy on Gender and Development, given that this remains as a Green Paper
- Monitor and Evaluate implementation of the National Strategic Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence, providing current data and extend implementation to address the next four year cycle (2027-2031)
- Engage more women in peacebuilding initiatives, crime prevention and security, particularly as it relates to fighting gender-based violence, homicides and crime within society, and
- Amend legislation to permit abortion in cases of rape and incest, to strengthen existing clauses which allow for abortion where the life of the mother is considered to be in grave danger, including for reasons of mental health.

END

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