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Dear Honourable Minister,

I am writing this letter to share my love and pride for my country Trinidad and Tobago. My hope is that you will be able to see, as I have, the many things that Trinidad and Tobago can teach the world. The passion and power with which Trinibagonians live is like a lit match in a sea of darkness; no matter how small the flame, it is awesomely bright.

Everyday, Trinidad and Tobago teaches the world acceptance and unity. In a country where such a great number of ethnicities, religions and languages abound, despite our differences, we live together as one. Although we may not always agree with one another and we may not always like one another's norms and practices, we all respect each other. Respect is what makes the difference between harmony and discord in society. It is a big lesson from so small a country.

The goodness of Trinbagonians is so infinite that no matter the size of the crises, no matter the size of the country, we continually stretch our hands to those in need. We are humbled by their distress. After Hurricane Ivan swept across Grenada, we rushed to their side, to help them rebuild and help those in harm. After Hurricane Katrina wounded the United States, Trinidad and Tobago was there to give what we could to help them in our own way. We show goodwill to all and let them know we are here. When people feel support, even if it is miles away, they fight harder; courage and hope fills them.

These two islands, because of their desire to ensure growth among its youth and a better quality of life for its citizens, teach the world accountability and responsibility. Here in Trinidad and Tobago, we have free tertiary education and the GATE program.

Individuals now have a world of knowledge at their fingertips. They merely have to reach out and take hold. Everyone has an opportunity to better him or herself and enrich society with their knowledge. For a small country, we are making strides and progressing together as a nation. No one is left behind, save by his or her own choice.

In a time where man is destroying his natural environment, Trinidad and Tobago are determined to safeguard nature. Facilities such as the Asa Wright Nature Centre and the Wild Forest Trust were put into effect to help protect and conserve areas of our country. Persons who visit these facilities learn about the need for looking after the environment in which we live and they learn to appreciate something that was there long before our ancestors came to these islands - the native flora and fauna. It is a great lesson to be taught by anyone, and it is my honour to be able to tell you that Trinidad and Tobago is teaching this lesson.

This year, the Honourable Marlene McDonald, Minister of Community Development, Culture and Gender Affairs spoke about the need to improve gender equality. Laws have been implemented to protect the rights of both men and women. Programmes to help the youth of the country realize their full potential as individuals and as members of society have also been introduced.

Trinidad and Tobago is committed to Vision 2020, which is a plan initiated by the

Honourable Patrick Manning to reach developed country status. The world can learn from Trinidad and Tobago that with perseverance, discipline and faith anything is possible. As our motto says, "Together we aspire, together we achieve." As a nation, we wish to make our country a better place to live. If we are able to influence other countries positively, then the reward is even greater.

The greatest lesson though, that can be learnt from us is resilience. A few wish to attack the development that the majority of the population is trying to achieve. However, we refuse to let crime and other such vices dampen our spirits. We labour on because we know what should be done and what we are capable of doing. I hope that I have enlightened you about my magnificent country, Trinidad and Tobago, and that you have come to respect it as I have.

Yours sincerely,
Shameda Benjamin.