

## **MGOS RESPONSE AND QUESTIONS FROM THE CSOs IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO THE VNR OF THE GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

Thank you Madam Chair for allowing us this opportunity to address this august gathering:

National disasters annually visit the region of Latin America and the Caribbean at this time of the year, however climate change and its impact has brought major changes to the environment as we knew it, the changing pattern of rain fall and or draught impacting on to name a few, but 2020 came with more challenges known as the COVID 19 pandemic, lock down measures for Trinidad and Tobago not only saw a spike in domestic gender based and family violence; but the country's mental health system/machinery was also put to the test, as the well being of people living with HIVAids and related mental health agriculture, land, water, coastal communities, fisheries, livelihood to health challenges, in addition to the destruction of the environment which raise quite a number of questions for example:-

1. Communities still feel disenfranchised and disengaged from the decision making systems in Trinidad and Tobago, particularly when it comes to the trade-offs between environmental protection and social and economic development
2. This lack of representation also shows up in the national narratives about sustainability. Especially around sustainable development and the SDG's, communities and local peoples are often not taken into consideration beyond tokenism. Their thoughts and opinion often don't make it into national progress reports.
3. National reporting on the SDG's also mainly takes place at the macro-indicator level, including the voluntary national reviews - apart from singular civil society representation. National reporting needs to dig down deeper into local experiences by generating and using community level data and information to report on SDG's progress from the ground up.
4. The CSO's for good environmental governance is working with 25+ communities to help them understand environmental and development issues, how to measure impact and progress along these issues (particularly in relation to the extractive sector) and how to tell their own stories

We ask you: In order to better assist and reach needy grassroots families should all governments in their annual budget set aside a pandemic relief funds as part of their social assistance programme?

Should we not pay more attention to mother earth our environment that has been crying out lift your knees of my neck, I cannot breathe.....