



**THE PRESIDENT  
REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**His Excellency Address at the Funeral of President NAR Robinson – May 1, 2014**

As a nation we mourn the passing of His Excellency Arthur NR Robinson TC, OC, SCC, and we have prayed and continue to pray for the repose of the soul of this mighty chief. We pray to Almighty God to find comfort and peace to his family, affected the most by his transition from this earth and specifically from his beloved homeland which he protected successfully at the peril of his own life when it mattered most.

At home and abroad, the contributions of His Excellency to the development of this Republic, the region and the wider international community have been lauded. In a letter of condolence to me His Excellency Ban Ki-moon Secretary General of the United Nations expressed the grief of the United Nations family referencing the Nurnberg and Tokyo war crimes tribunal after World War II, he stated "Many did not believe that we would like to see another tribunal charged with bringing to justice perpetrators of atrocities and many of us thought the creation of such an institution would be legally and politically impossible. Thanks to President Robinson singular vision, his tireless work and his inspiring leadership, we were proved wrong. The United Nations and the peoples of the world are eternally grateful to President Robinson, the International Criminal Court (ICC) is his legacy to us and for that his family and his country can justly be very proud."

Judge Phillip Kirsch, chair of the Advisory Committee on nominations to the ICC and First President of the court, who also worked with the late President during his capacity as chairman of the Preparatory Committee of the ICC stated "President Robinson was a truly remarkable man who never wavered in his vision of a world of justice for victims of serious international crimes. The international community has lost a true pioneer."

The present President of the ICC, here with us today even coined his own expression of the late President's worth, calling him the grandfather of the ICC. Ben Ferencz, someone I was privileged to meet many years ago, now 95, the youngest prosecutor at the Nurnberg trial and the only surviving one, called me, he a dear friend of the late President and would have been here but for health reasons and he sends his apologies. We spoke and he pined the loss of a visionary.

This is but a small indicator of how this esteemed late President is held by renowned scholars and jurist internationally. We must preserve his memory so that current and future generations will not only remember the efforts he made to national development and the promotion and preservation of law at both the national and international levels.

At a time when there is an ample dose of restlessness nationally as well as overseas, where there exists much suspicion about the action of others, whether within our own neighbours

or elsewhere. At a moment when people are holding their leaders to greater degrees of accountability and responsibility, as a people we must seek to preserve the legacy of this fallen patriot. Not merely through the naming of buildings or other monuments in his honour but we must go beyond these trappings however well-intentioned and admirable they might be.

Trinidad and Tobago must establish programs and formulate policies which are geared towards the complete fulfilment of President Robinson's dream. His vision of Trinidad and Tobago as a ship which should never steer away from its original moorings, from its founding principles which have been codified in our constitution and laws and which also enunciated in our watchwords of Discipline, Production and Tolerance.

If we are to give true meaning to his legacy, if we are to embrace it and not squander what he has bequeathed to us, we must ensure that our national motto "Together We Aspire, Together We Achieve," are not only manifested in our interracial relationships but must also be implemented in the equitable distribution of the proceeds derived from the exploitation of our natural patrimony, so that we can nurture and continue to build a fair, equitable, just and compassionate society.

We must also hold a sacred sacrosanct his belief that morality in public affairs is an essential component of good governance. Correspondently, we must also work towards greater harmony and equity in the relationship between the two main islands which form our archipelagic and unitary state which is Trinidad and Tobago.

In the same way he was renowned for the quality of his contribution to parliamentary debates, we must as a matter of course elevate the level of debate in all our assemblies, whether at the national or local levels so that we can sometimes rise above the partisanship and small-mindedness in the conduct of affairs for the benefit of the people.

Let us continue to build and advocate, as he did for the inclusion of the pernicious international drug trade as a crime within the jurisdiction of the ICC, so that the perpetrators of this trans-boundary crime do not continue to go unpunished and benefit from a culture of impunity, ruining the lives of many. The youth of many countries and undermining the socioeconomic and political systems of countless states.

In this endeavour, we must make to reassemble the collation President Robinson put together in the late 1980s when he was on the international circuit campaigning for the establishment of the ICC. This collation that was composed of CARICOM states, like minded states among the international community, as well as members of civil society and the NGO community, assisted him in making the seemingly impossible dream of the creation of the ICC into a living monument symbolising the important role that small states can play on the world stage.

As a nation we should also embrace the good will towards Trinidad and Tobago emanating from all corners of the globe since his death. This can be a catalyst for us to effect influence once more on global affairs in a meaningful, fundamental way. Consequently, and it definitely should not be limited to this sole matter, we must give on unflinching support to our country's bid to host the secretariat of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which will assist the authorities in implementing the provisions of that treaty and prevent the diversion of arm from the legal market into the hands of gang leaders and other criminals whose actions continue to wreak havoc in our society and in the region.

We must never forget that the late President himself, and his dear bodyguard, were victims of the use of guns which would have entered these shores illegally. I therefore make a plea to the powers that be, to provide the requisite financial and other resources to enable our diplomats and others who are charged with the responsibility for advocating and negotiating for Trinidad and Tobago to be selected as the location for the ATT Secretariat.

We are in the business of humanity. Impunity in one part of the world reverberates through the entire world. In this business of ours called humanity, cannot and must not be international currency or a bargaining chip for peace and stability anywhere in the world. The culture of impunity therefore must neither be revered on the altar of nationalism, or serenity.

Finally, the establishment of an ATT Secretariat, in the Republic of ours will be consistent with President Robinson's philosophy that our geographical size must not determine the measure of our contribution to a world order that is based on justice and the rule of law. May he rest in peace and his family and dear friends be comforted by a world that is celebrating his life.