

Report

# Pathways to Implementing GST Recommendations the Caribbean

Country Report: Trinidad & Tobago

Author: Kory Hall

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# Introduction

This supplementary country report is developed to highlight the current endeavours of Caribbean SIDS on the road to addressing the recommendations of Paragraph 28 of the Global Stocktake, and staying within the 1.5°C global warming limit. It also will assess progress to date and identify areas to possibly further accelerate the achievement of targets in line with the findings of the regional analysis.

Recalling that the recommendations from the main report are:

## **1. Strengthen Data and Monitoring Systems**

Expand the scope and reach of the joint CARICOM and OLACDE Energy Information System (sieCARICOM), to cover additional CARICOM member states thus creating a standardized data repository to facilitate improved analysis and decision making.

## **2. Streamline Regulatory Frameworks**

Expand the remit of C-SERMS to review the legislation covering the generation of electricity in each territory, thus developing customized yet harmonious legal frameworks and permitting processes that promote more efficient inter-agency cooperation (regionally & nationally). It requires deliberate actions by governments to remove barriers to the development of Renewable Energy (RE) projects and advance the progression of the energy transition.

## **3. Support Capacity Building**

Develop a regional skill improvement program that improves internal negotiating capabilities and development fundamentals. By investing in technical training and institutional capacity building for Caribbean nationals, countries will mitigate the risks of increased project costs and low investor confidence in RE projects.

## **4. Promote Regional Collaboration**

Expand the remit of C-SERMS to advance the development of shared procurement mechanisms, and regional project development processes in the advancement of energy transition targets.

This country report focuses on Trinidad & Tobago, which presents a unique case as it is one of the few Caribbean nations with exploitable hydrocarbon resources. The country's long standing energy sector has allowed it to develop systems and infrastructure that promote the development of energy resources. To that end, Trinidad and Tobago must be applauded for its:

- Experience with strategic planning and developing institutional readiness, demonstrating that in the case of the hydrocarbon energy sector, early strategic groundwork, national policies, roadmaps, and the execution of technical assessments create the foundation for long term energy goals.
- Leveraging of existing energy expertise and project development knowledge to develop strategies for expansion into the clean energy space.

Caribbean nations can look to Trinidad & Tobago for lessons learned and technical expertise. This can facilitate the accelerated and cost-effective rollout of renewables, and the continued promotion of the capacity building of Caribbean nationals. Simultaneously however, findings reveal a tendency to delay the enactment of draft policies; a level of inertia that delays project development in the green space, even in the presence of feasible technical and financial models<sup>i</sup>. This policy inertia occurs in an environment that continues to advocate for the development and use of natural gas assets<sup>ii</sup>, which can lead to diversion of investment and policy attention away from energy transition projects.

# Background – Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago, the southernmost nation in the Caribbean, is considered a high-income, hydrocarbon-dependent economy<sup>iii</sup>. The country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stood at approximately US\$26.3 billion in 2023, which despite its small size, ranks it among the wealthiest economies in the region on a per capita basis<sup>iv</sup>. Trinidad and Tobago's economy is highly dependent on its oil and gas sector which has existed for over a century.<sup>v</sup> Presently, natural gas and the production of related products dominate activity in the sector, resulting in the country's global ranking as the number one exporter of Ammonia in 2023<sup>vi</sup>. The sector contributes approximately 40% of GDP, and more than 80% of exports, which provides the substantial share of government revenues<sup>vii</sup>.



Figure 1: Point Lisas Industrial Estate. Source: Trinidad & Tobago Energy Chamber

Due to its geographic location slightly below the hurricane basin, Trinidad and Tobago has been less prone to experiencing hurricanes than many of its Caribbean neighbours<sup>viii</sup>. In spite of this, the country still remains exposed to flooding, coastal erosion, and sea level rise, as a result of climate change. This presents a well-known contradiction as the country's carbon intensive energy sector results in Trinidad and Tobago being one of the highest per capita emitters of greenhouse gases globally<sup>ix</sup>. Also, though considered as high-income, the twin island state suffers from socio-economic challenges of citizen security, income inequality and poverty<sup>x</sup>. This combined reality of

energy wealth and climate vulnerability is a justification for the urgent implementation of a managed, just, and sustainable energy transition.



Figure 2: Trinidad & Tobago Carnival. Source: Destination Trinidad & Tobago

Looking specifically at electricity generation, Trinidad & Tobago sets itself apart in its consumption as well as the preferred fuel for generation, natural gas. In 2021, the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission, the country's electricity utility, sold **8,267,817,849 kWh<sup>xi</sup>**, sourced via its various Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) with Independent Power Producers (IPP). For comparison, Jamaica which is approximately twice the size of Trinidad and Tobago, with a population that is also approximately two times larger, consumed approximately **3,165,980,000kWh<sup>xii</sup>** in the same year. Trinidad and Tobago is an energy intensive nation with active petrochemical and industrial consumers, and the transformation of this sector is a possible avenue to achieving climate change emissions targets.

## Current Policies Enabling Trinidad & Tobago's Transition

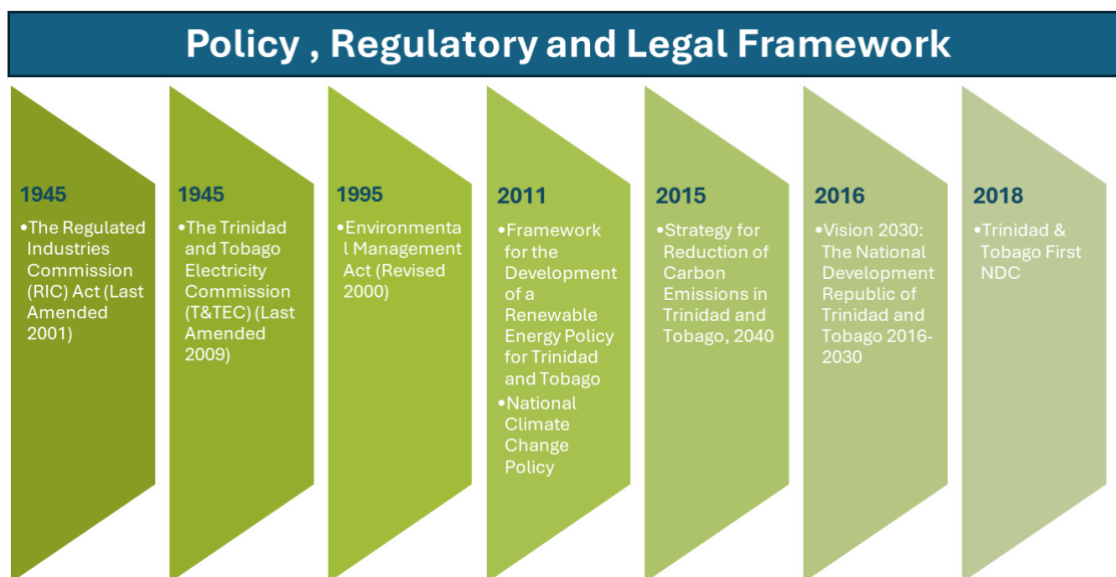


Figure 3: Trinidad & Tobago's Policy Legal and Regulatory Framework

Trinidad & Tobago has been implementing policies, legal acts and regulations related to the energy sector and specifically electricity generation and transmission, since 1945 with the introduction of the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission (T&TEC) Act, and the Regulated Industries Commission (RIC) Act. Other energy related policies have mainly addressed the country's hydrocarbon sector, addressed the exploration and production of hydrocarbons and the creation of state agencies to market hydrocarbon products.

In relation to climate change, in 2011 The National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) was established, and since then, the country has developed numerous strategies and frameworks that signal a desire to explore renewable energy (RE) sources and reduce carbon emissions. Some of these documents include:

- [The Framework for the Development of a Renewable Energy Policy for Trinidad and Tobago \(2011\)](#),
- [The Strategy for Reduction of Carbon Emissions in Trinidad and Tobago, 2040 \(2015\)](#).

These documents were also referenced in the development of Trinidad & Tobago's First NDC (2018), which identified the power generation sector as one of the focal areas for reducing carbon emissions. The supporting implementation plan estimated that by promoting energy conservation, renewable and alternative energies and other measures, Trinidad and Tobago could achieve a 72 MtCO<sub>2</sub>e reduction in total emissions by 2030<sup>xiii</sup>. It should be noted that Trinidad & Tobago's NDC has identified a commitment of a reduction of emissions by 15% by 2030 from Business as Usual (BAU)<sup>xiv</sup>. These reductions are expected to come from the Transport and Power sectors.

Though the NDC does not explicitly state the targeted share of renewables, it has identified that renewables will form the next phase of the Power sector's development.

In the last five years the country has developed the **“Roadmap for a Green Hydrogen Economy in Trinidad & Tobago (November 2022)”** which identifies possibilities for reducing carbon emissions through green hydrogen production as well as **“Setting the path for Wind Energy Generation in Trinidad & Tobago (May 2023)”** (hereinafter referred to as the wind strategy) which articulates a plan to deploy inshore and offshore wind by 2035. The roadmap calls for the deployment of utility scale RE projects to power electrolyzers for hydrogen production, identifying wind as the key technology to achieving a low carbon economy. Combined, the reports suggest that Trinidad & Tobago could explore the installation of 57GW of offshore wind capacity, which, based on the capacity factor for offshore wind, can result in approximately 25GW of power output available to electrolyzers for the development of the green hydrogen economy by 2065<sup>xv</sup>.

In the absence of supplementary (to the NCCP) enacted official policies, as many are still in draft or awaiting cabinet approval, Trinidad & Tobago via the research and development of strategy frameworks/reports, has identified avenues for achieving emissions reductions and the deployment of RE resources<sup>xvi</sup>. To facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of these reports/frameworks, State Owned Enterprises such as NGC Green, a subsidiary of the National Gas Company of Trinidad & Tobago (NGC), have been established to focus on business development opportunities in the green economic space, and are tasked with improving the coordination of efforts in the energy transition journey. This is a required initiative as the current permitting process is handled by multiple agencies, each with varying interests that are not necessarily aligned. Questions of liability and permitting process coordination and oversight if addressed with official legal directives will improve investor confidence in the likelihood of projects being developed without deleterious process related delays.

In the pursuit of a net-zero future, Trinidad & Tobago despite its strategic moves toward emissions reduction and renewable energy deployment, has only achieved 0.5% (as of 2023) of its generating capacity from RE<sup>xvii</sup>, and it appears to remain firmly tied to its natural gas economy despite declining gas production<sup>xviii</sup>. Publicly, the exploration and production of natural gas is explicitly endorsed by both policymakers and state-owned enterprises<sup>xix</sup> as a key component of the energy transition, viewed as an intermediate fuel and vital source of export revenue and domestic energy stability<sup>xx</sup>. Though natural gas is promoted as a transitional energy source in electricity generation due to its lower emissions when compared to fuel oils or coal, it still contributes to global emissions. Moreover, several studies have indicated that hydrocarbon producing and exporting countries often face political and economic incentives to sustain production and protect hydrocarbon operations<sup>xxix</sup>. This can hinder the implementation of domestic policy action and delay the broader energy transition.

# Progressing to Net-Zero?

## Current Electricity Generation Sources

Trinidad and Tobago's electricity sector is commercially structured in a manner that maximizes the use of the country's natural gas resources. The generation and distribution of electricity involves multiple entities from Independent Power Producers (IPPs) to the national utility T&TEC, as well as the NGC which indirectly supplies fuel to the generation units.



Figure 4: Trinidad Generation Unlimited, La Brea Trinidad & Tobago. Source: Guardian Newspaper

The distribution grid, which is historically designed to accommodate large, more centralized, synchronous thermal plants, has access to a generating portfolio that represents approximately 2100MW of installed capacity provided by:

- Trinidad Generation Unlimited (TGU) which a 720MW Combined-Cycle plant,
- Powergen Penal 236MW Combined Cycle plant.
- Powergen Point Lisas 838MW Simple Cycle Plant
- Trinity Power Limited 225MW Simple Cycle Plant
- T&TEC Cove Tobago 65.6MW Simple Cycle Plant<sup>xxiii</sup>



Figure 5: Powergen Penal, Trinidad & Tobago. Source Powergen

Currently, the country's first utility scale solar project at Brechin Castle is estimated to be completed by the end of 2025. The project which was developed by Bp Lightsource in partnership with Shell Trinidad & Tobago Limited, Bp Trinidad & Tobago Limited and NGC has a design capacity of 92MW with no additional battery storage. Phase one of the project has already delivered first electrons from approximately 40MW of the plant's capacity as of July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025<sup>xxiv</sup>. At full operation, it will increase the country's RE share to approximately 4% of total installed generating capacity.



Figure 6: Brechin Castle Solar Plant, Trinidad & Tobago. Source: Energy Chamber

Using the target of 30% of generation from RE by 2030, which is often referenced in media sources rather than the targets quoted in the NDC, and considering the recommendations of Paragraph 28 of the GST, which would only require the share of renewables to increase to 1.5%, Trinidad and Tobago must be deliberate and aggressive in pursuit of the achievement of the 30% target. With the inclusion of the generation of Brechin Castle, the country still requires that approximately 538MW of RE generating capacity be brought online in lieu of natural gas-based generation, if the current capacity portfolio is to be maintained. The pursuit of the larger of the two identified

targets, falls in line with the vision of C-SERMS and further aligns the country with regional goals.

## Developing the pathway to net-zero

Based on the recommendations of the wind strategy, Trinidad & Tobago's clean energy future will be based on wind energy. Preliminary studies identified a series of potential wind generation locations, **nine (9) onshore and five (5) offshore, that have a combined potential of approximately 5560MW of capacity output.** When other fixed bottom high potential offshore locations are included, this figure drastically increases to **60,625MW.** Still, the strategy confined itself to the deployment of wind resources out to 2035 and has identified a target of **2GW.**

To achieve the target of 2 GW installed wind capacity by 2035 the actions proposed are time bound in sequential horizons / milestones. To build local capacities and capabilities the wind journey should start from exploiting the onshore wind energy potential and gradually move towards exploiting its offshore vast potential. Of these recommended activities the onshore WRAP is currently underway with the deployment of Light Detection and Ranging devices (LiDARs) to measure wind speeds at the identified high potential locations<sup>xxv</sup>. Since their deployment, the Government has committed to procuring additional LiDAR units to expand the ability of the program to take concurrent measurements at multiple locations. Interest was also expressed in commencing the procurement process to execute the offshore WRAP in unison with

the onshore, with the goal of having a ready database of bankable data available by 2026<sup>xxvi</sup>.

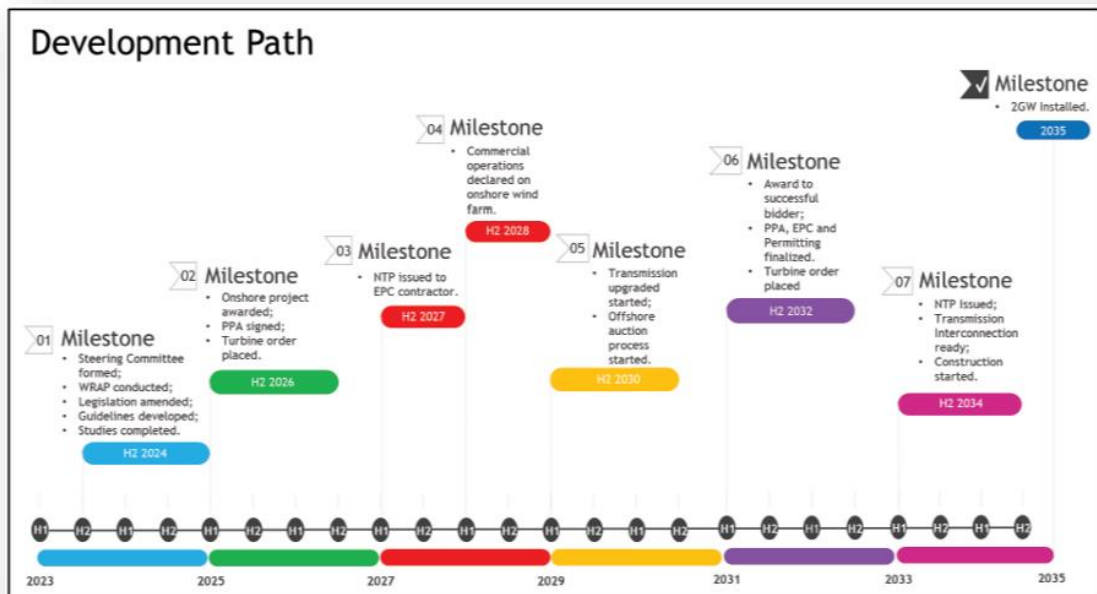


Figure 7: Development path for the creation of a wind industry in Trinidad and Tobago. Source: Setting the path for Wind Energy Generation in Trinidad & Tobago

If implemented as guided by the wind strategy, Trinidad & Tobago’s reliance on gas for power generation could be drastically reduced, assisting the country’s achievement of its NDC targets. In terms of pursuing net-zero however, the country remains firmly placed to continue the exploitation of its hydrocarbon resources which is somewhat contradictory in nature to the intent of the Paris Agreement. In the short term, the two sectors can exist side by side, however the full energy transition should be defined and established to reaffirm the country’s commitment to the goal of net-zero.

Reduce Emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advance low carbon emissions development through NDC implementation in pursuit of a possible Net Zero Emissions future.</li> </ul>
Low Carbon Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage investment and entrepreneurship in low-carbon business models and technologies, developing pathways that will strengthen financial frameworks and regulations.</li> </ul>
Green Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop pathways for current hydrocarbon sector workers to train and reskill, creating a workforce to capitalise on future low carbon job opportunities.</li> </ul>
Gender Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure gender equality is upheld in the transition to new industries and sectors.</li> </ul>

Figure 8: Sample of objectives identified in Trinidad & Tobago's Draft Just Transition Policy

## Implementing the Plan

Trinidad & Tobago has a long history of energy project development, constructing and operating vast natural gas pipeline and processing facilities, as well as LNG export terminals and large power generation facilities. The country's energy sector has developed a large pool of technically sound and experienced professionals whose skills can be easily transferred to the development of a wind energy sector. However, Trinidad & Tobago's barriers to implementation arise in the administrative processes like approvals (influenced by policy, legal and regulatory structures), public opinion and financing.

The following recommendations could assist with fast-tracking implementation and advancing renewable energy policy at the national level in Trinidad and Tobago:

### 1. Streamline Approvals and Permitting

The Wind Strategy has already identified a few of the regulatory updates that can be considered by the state to improve the project development pipeline, especially for RE projects.

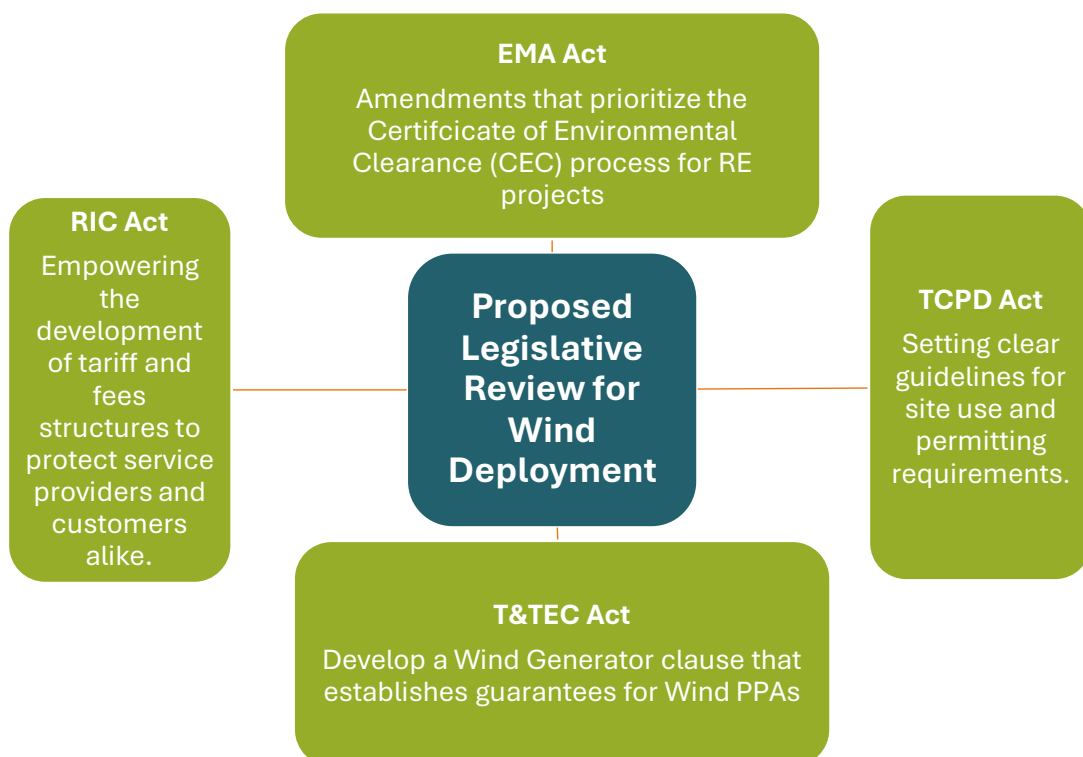


Figure 9: Possible Legislative Updates as identified by the Strategy for Wind Development in Trinidad & Tobago

These updates can potentially remove bottlenecks in the project development process resulting in reduced project development costs, improved investor confidence and more efficient development cycles.

## 2. Create Buy-In

Wind projects are also subject to some political and public criticism due to their visual impact to the landscape, the land space required to develop projects and environmental concerns regarding aviary migrations and noise pollution<sup>xxvii</sup>. A risk to energy transition project implementation is the lack of public engagement and a perceived lack of transparency in the impacts of projects and the associated benefits. Trinidad & Tobago has experienced the negative impact of public and political opinion on large infrastructure projects in the past, and given the importance of executing a clean energy strategy, it is advised that effective public consultation take place to gain the required support by public interest groups. This also presents an opportunity to start growing interest in the pursuit of a just and equitable transition that promotes skill conversion to the green space, as well as encouraging gender equality in the development of women to fill roles in the green energy services space.

## 3. Pursue Diverse Financing Options

Trinidad & Tobago's classification as a high-income earner has traditionally precluded access to concessionary funding by multilateral funding agencies. As a result of this, the island nation progressed the development of its energy sector via project financing fundamentals which relies more on commercial structures to improve project viability and attract Foreign Direct Investment, rather than concessionary funding as an avenue to project development. The development of the wind energy sector and by extension a green hydrogen economy powered by wind, offers revenue generation avenues that will underpin a project finance package. As an example, via a PPA, a project developer can map the expected revenues for the entire project life and create a justifiable case for investment. It should also be noted that due to subsidies, Trinidad and Tobago's ranking as one of the cheapest electricity costs in the region creates an artificial financial challenge for the penetration of other technologies<sup>xxviii</sup>. This requires a restructuring of rates to create the required competitive environment<sup>xxix</sup>.

Alternatively, a blended finance option such as the "contingently recoverable grant facility" that is being explored by St Kitts and Nevis for the development of geothermal resources, can provide flexibility in the financing of projects. This approach treats funding as a concessionary loan if the project succeeds, however if the project falls short of the intended target, the facility becomes a grant, thus reducing the financial risk exposure for the nation.

# Conclusion

Trinidad and Tobago will continue to face a complex dual challenge: pursue a sustainable a low-carbon future that contributes to maintaining a survivable global climate, or remain deeply tied to its natural gas economy that has provided for its citizens but is finite and presents concerns for energy security. As the world transitions to the implementation of extensive decarbonization efforts, the market for hydrocarbon products dwindles, shrinking sources of income. The pathway forward may not be an immediate, wholesale abandonment of hydrocarbons, but a very carefully managed transition that preserves economic stability while accelerating investment in clean energy.

With the construction of the Brechin Castle Solar facility, and the lessons learned in developing that project, continued focus needs to be placed on:

- Amending existing and quickly enacting draft policies to enable the fast-tracking of renewable energy projects. Providing standardized power purchase agreements (PPAs), and updated grid codes to create investor confidence.
- Moving beyond distributed solar projects and expanding the portfolio of utility-scale RE, paired with battery storage to alleviate any risks associated with the current grid readiness.
- Preparing the grid for the eventual modernization exercise that needs to occur to manage the new energy sources and systems. Investing in transmission and distribution upgrades, as well as digitalization efforts improving the ability to integrate inverter-based renewables reliably.

Trinidad and Tobago's transition needs to be elevated to a national imperative that creates regional opportunities. Decisive domestic policy, scaling up RE generation and associated storage, will begin to move the country from planning strategy to full and accelerated implementation. These will not only safeguard its economic resilience in a decarbonizing world but also position Trinidad and Tobago as a regional leader in demonstrating how hydrocarbon-dependent economies can chart a sustainable path toward net-zero.

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