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**SENATOR WADE MARK, CHAIR OF PGA NATIONAL GROUP, PARLIAMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**PGA REGIONAL CARIBBEAN PARLIAMENTARY WEBINAR ON NUCLEAR AND RADIOLOGICAL SECURITY**

**THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 2ND, 2021**

**9:00AM**

I am very grateful to the PGA for organizing this most informative Webinar today.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made it abundantly clear that we have all become far too complacent about existential risks that we all have to face today - at the national, regional and international level.

For some years now, and in my capacity as Chair of the PGA National Group in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, I have undertaken a series of initiatives to promote greater biological security, both within Trinidad and Tobago itself, as well as within the wider region.

The latter included a PGA Field Mission to Haiti 4 years ago where we are still encouraging the authorities to take action and join the Biological Weapons Convention.

Haiti is the sole remaining country in the region, indeed hemisphere, which is not yet a State Party to the BWC.



Once again, Covid 19 has also served to remind everyone - in no uncertain terms - that when we talk of biological threats and potential weaponization of disease - these are not abstract or esoteric threats.

They are real and they are present - today.

Covid-19 has also opened the eyes of non-state actors, including terrorist organizations, to the potential for devastation caused by biological threats and disease.

Not only that, but other Weapons of Mass Destruction, and their potential misuse by terrorists, cannot be overlooked.

Nuclear and radioactive weapons fall into this category.

Within the Caribbean region we have one nuclear reactor.

The issue of transportation of nuclear waste by sea through the region has excited considerable past debate.

We are just as vulnerable to nuclear and radiological security as other regions are.

We must respond in kind.

To this day, Trinidad and Tobago is still not a State Party to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of International Terrorism.



This vital treaty was adopted over 15 years ago now and requires States Parties to take a number of practical, common steps measures to mitigate the possibility of nuclear terrorism.

We in Trinidad and Tobago must also do our part and delay no further in joining this essential treaty.

[https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=XVIII-15&chapter=18&Temp=mtdsg3&clang=\\_en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-15&chapter=18&Temp=mtdsg3&clang=_en)

Similarly, a number of States elsewhere in our region have yet to join and I would urge them to act also accordingly.

For the same reason, and while I am glad to note that Trinidad is a State Party to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material - we have not yet ratified the all important Amendment to this Treaty that was adopted some years ago, to reflect new concerns.

[https://www-legacy.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Conventions/cppnm\\_amend\\_status.pdf](https://www-legacy.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Conventions/cppnm_amend_status.pdf)

It would be my intention also to follow-up in this matter at an appropriate juncture in time.

Before I conclude these brief remarks, I would also briefly like to acknowledge the longstanding support by the Canadian Government promoting greater universality and implementation of these treaties.

I was pleased to organize a PGA Regional Workshop on the BWC in Port of Spain in April 2019 and very much hope that we soon be able to resume these crucial activities in the near future.

Thank you.