OPENING REMARKS

THE HONOURABLE DR. LACKRAM BODOE

MINISTER OF HEALTH

AT THE

UWI MEDICAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION'S 14TH

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL REUNION CONFERENCE

SATURDAY JULY 26, 2025

HYATT REGENCY HOTEL, PORT OF SPAIN

9:00 AM

Good Morning,

It is a great pleasure and honour to address you at this 14th International Medical Reunion Conference.

Let me begin by extending warm congratulations to Dr. Lesley Roberts, Interim President, and the entire UWI Medical Alumni Association organising committee for bringing this important gathering to fruition. Your dedication to fostering strong professional bonds among Caribbean and diaspora physicians is both commendable and timely as we enter a new era in healthcare.

We stand at the threshold of a digital revolution. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a distant possibility, it is already reshaping the landscape of modern medicine. From diagnostics to data management, from personalised treatment to predictive public health planning, AI holds immense potential to improve

outcomes, reduce inefficiencies, and enhance the patient experience.

As Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, aptly put it, *"AI is perhaps the most transformational technology of our time, and healthcare is perhaps AI's most pressing application."* Here in Trinidad and Tobago, and indeed across the Caribbean, the question is no longer *if* we will adopt AI in healthcare, but *how* effectively and equitably we will integrate these tools into our systems.

Under its digital transformation agenda, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is taking bold steps to leverage artificial intelligence and digital innovation. Our goal is to transition toward AI-assisted government services that enhance responsiveness and efficiency in areas such as social support, emergency response and chronic disease management.

We envision a future with AI-powered healthcare systems that enable providers to securely access and share patient data, improving diagnosis, enhancing care coordination and strengthening patient safety. Central to this vision is the implementation of a National Electronic Health Record (EHR) system guided by the principle: One Patient, One Record. This unified system will offer healthcare professionals a comprehensive, longitudinal view of each patient's medical

history, ensuring that treatment decisions are better informed and more timely.

In parallel, the establishment of a robust Health Information Management System (HIMS) is essential. Such a system will allow for real-time monitoring of health services, facilitate the evaluation of performance metrics and support evidence-based decision-making. Together, the EHR and HIMS will form the digital backbone of a modern, data-driven healthcare system, one that is transparent, responsive and geared toward continuous improvement in healthcare delivery.

AI is further central to the development of telemedicine, remote diagnostics, smart hospital management systems and AI-driven epidemiological forecasting, all of which will strengthen the capacity of our health system.

AI is, in fact, already being utilizsed in some of our health facilities, enabling doctors to transcribe patient notes more efficiently and reducing the time spent on manual documentation. The rollout of e-prescriptions has been implemented across all Regional Health Authorities, enabling doctors to issue electronic prescriptions that can be accessed directly by pharmacies. This initiative reduces the risk of errors and enhances adherence to medication regimens.

However, as we embrace these advancements, we must be vigilant. Our approach must be inclusive, ethical, and grounded in the realities of our population. AI must not deepen existing inequities or marginalise vulnerable communities. Instead, it should strengthen efforts by helping close gaps in access and extending quality care to our rural, elderly and underserved populations.

We must also safeguard the public's trust by prioritising data privacy, cybersecurity and ethical oversight. AI in healthcare is only as effective as the integrity and transparency of the systems that support it.

To the UWI medical alumni gathered here today, you are not just participants in this transformation, you are its architects. Many of you are already involved in research, innovation, or policy work at the intersection of health and technology. I urge you to mentor, collaborate and invest in building our region's digital health capacity. Let this conference be the spark that ignites bold initiatives, informed frameworks, and collective action to harness AI for public good.

As Minister of Health, I remain committed to creating a healthcare system that is modern, resilient and people-centered. But this journey is not one the Government can undertake alone. We need our medical professionals, our alumni and our innovators to walk with us.

Let us step into this new era not with hesitation, but with vision. Let us not merely react to global trends but shape them.

Thank you for the opportunity to share in this landmark occasion. I look forward to the dialogue, innovations and partnerships that will emerge. May this conference be a launch pad for a new chapter in Caribbean healthcare; powered by AI, grounded in ethics and delivered with compassion.

I thank you.