



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

**FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT**  
MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY



**CONFERENCE SCAMS**  
**ADVISORY NOTICE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

**Reference No. : ADV 02/2013**  
**Issued : 27 September 2013**

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The Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (“the [FIUTT](#)”) is publishing this advisory in accordance with Section 17(1) (b) of the Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago Act 11 of 2009.

**PURPOSE OF THIS ADVISORY**

This *Advisory* is intended to provide the General Public with information on observed trends within our jurisdiction. The FIUTT hopes that this advisory will assist the General Public in identifying the specific criminal activity illustrated and thereby reduce monetary loss and emotional harm.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

This scam involves bogus emails, inviting recipients to attend a conference, professional workshop, seminar, etc., oftentimes using the names of international or professional organizations such as the United Nations (UN), various Human Rights organizations, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), Foundations or other international organizations, or key personnel in these organizations. The scammers may also use the names of organizations that do not exist, but closely resemble well-known organizations.

These invitations are usually sent to a person’s email address or through their professional networks such as LinkedIn.

**HOW THE SCAM WORKS**

**Appeal:**

These invitation frequently appeal to a benevolent humanitarian cause such as Human Rights, Global Peace, Human Trafficking, Child Abuse, Racism, HIV/AIDs Awareness, Climate Change or Economic Development.

**Logistics:**

The email usually states that conference costs, flight and accommodation will be borne by the organizing committee and that only a registration or processing fee is required.

The names of bonafide hotels and conference facilities are often used. Typically these fake conferences are supposed to take place in two countries, the USA and another country (in Canada, Europe, Africa or the Middle East). Visa assistance is offered by contacting the Secretariat at the time of registration. False e-tickets may even be provided.

Telephone, fax and email contacts are usually provided. Contact emails are usually personal email accounts such as hotmail and gmail or appear to be from corporate email accounts. The contact email address is usually different to that from which the invitation is sent.

Persons who sign up for the conference will be told they need to pay the registration fee, hotel or visa fee via Western Union or MoneyGram.

The invitation is not addressed to the invitee by name but by a general term, eg "conference invitee", "delegate" or sir/madam. Often the invitation is unprofessionally drafted, with grammatical errors e.g. "united state of america". However, they are usually very detailed on the subject matter and appeal to a selective audience, thus appearing authentic.

### **CAUTION TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

- ❖ This scam appears to be Advance Fee Fraud; **there is no conference;**
- ❖ This scam and has the potential for **identity theft;**
- ❖ This scam has the potential to be the initial stage in a wider international **criminal network involving kidnapping for ransom and human trafficking;**
- ❖ Do NOT provide any personal or financial information to persons you only know via the Internet;
- ❖ Do NOT send any money by wire transfer services (non-bank services) to pay anyone you only know via the Internet. Never send money by Western Union or MoneyGram to anyone you don't know personally, no exceptions!
- ❖ Do not open any attachments in these emails;
- ❖ This scam has the hall marks of the Nigerian 419 scam or "Advance Fee Fraud" because the common principle of the scam format is to get the victim to send cash upfront by promising a benefit that they would receive later.

Below is an example of an email invitation of this scam.

### **Fraudulent Conference email invitation**

The following event is fake. It is sent to collect registration and visa fees from would-be participants. The email address is a variation of a legitimate UN address and the alleged signatory is a key employee of the UN. Note grammatical errors such as "call for paper" and "... assist you to obtain a British entry visa so easily."

This email message was purportedly sent on June 25, which seems absurdly late for a major conference taking place on 29-31 July, 2013, with paper submissions. No closing date was given for the submissions or registration.

From: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs [<mailto:summit@desa-un.org.uk>]

Sent: Tuesday, 25 June 2013 11:40 PM

To: \*\*\*\*\*

Subject: Conference Invitation:

Dear Conference Invitee,

On behalf of United Nations scientific working committee, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) invites you to a Global conference on "Financial and Economic Crisis on Sustainable Development".

This summit is scheduled to take place from 29-31 July, 2013 in London, United Kingdom at the Excel International conference center.

The aim of this conference is to assess the worst global economic melt-down that has struck most countries of the world, and identify areas to mitigate the impact of the crisis and initiate a ground work for future collaborative transformation of the international financial architecture.

Registration is free and strictly for invited individuals and organizations only. As an invited participant, this is your invitation code number [UNDESA/682] always quote your code in all correspondence. UNDESA will provide you with a free round trip flight ticket (to London and from London). You will only be responsible for your accommodation for the four days duration of this event.

Note: If you require an entry visa to London (UK) to attend this meeting, UNDESA will assist you to obtain a British entry visa so easily.

Call for paper:

We welcome paper presentation from any participant that desire to make a presentation during this summit. Paper presentations would be scheduled for 20 minutes each including questions.

For registration, send in your acceptance letter directly to the UNDESA conference secretariat via e-mail: [summit@desa-un.org.uk](mailto:summit@desa-un.org.uk)

Quote your invitation code number [UNDESA/682]. For inquiries call +44-70-1291-0530 or +44-70-1291-4192

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar Detho,  
Assistant Secretary-General.  
(United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs)

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