

**Capacity Building Workshop on Child Labour:
Communication with Children at Risk of/ in Situations of Child Labour
Hilton Trinidad and Conference Centre
November 29 to 30, 2022**

OPENING REMARKS BY PERMANENT SECRETARY(AG.)

Child Labour is a form of child abuse and is a violation of children's rights that prevents them from reaching their full potential. It harms a child's social and mental development, reduces their ability to enjoy childhood, and limits educational opportunities. Without an education, children grow up without the skills they need to secure decent employment as adults.

I would like to take this opportunity to indicate the Ministry's and by extension the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's, profound gratitude to the Director and Staff of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean, for hosting this Workshop today. The ILO has been working assiduously with the Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour in

the provision of sustained technical, financial and technological support in the prevention and elimination of Child Labour, as we all work towards SDG Target 8.7 to: Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. This longstanding relationship with the ILO has provided strategic direction and key resources required to strengthen the capacity of its Officers and devise systems to monitor and guide the process for achieving the mandate of the Ministry.

The aim and the reason we are all here today, is to help ensure that children receive the education and training they need to become productive adults in decent employment. As strategic partners in this process, the aim is to ensure the protection of the rights of children through the establishment of protocols for the investigation of reports of child labour.

The Labour Inspectorate Unit is the enforcement arm of the Ministry of Labour with responsibility for the prevention and elimination of child labour. Today we have amongst us 12 Labour Inspectors participating in this training workshop. Labour Inspectors investigate complaints about child labour and also monitor the employment of young persons between the ages of 16 to 18 years. Mr. Farouk Mohammed, Chief Labour Inspector Specialist, will provide more information on the work of the Unit in his presentation later on. In addition, we have participants from various Divisions/Units of the MoL, Occupational Safety and Health Agency, Child Protection Unit, Counter Trafficking Unit, Gender and Child Affairs Division – Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, Tobago House of Assembly and off course, the Children’s Authority. These Agencies all play a crucial role in both prevention and elimination of child labour.

Child Labour is a multi-dimensional issue and requires a holistic approach from various actors. Cognisant of this, the Ministry of Labour established the National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour in 2019. This Committee brings together 14 government agencies, 2 NGOs and Academia to oversee the conduct of research on child labour; by geographic areas, by sectors and by economic activities. The data from this research will guide Stakeholder Consultations towards the development of a National Child Labour Policy and Action Plan. The Steering Committee commenced preliminary work to support the development of the National Child Labour Policy via the establishment of 3 Sub-Committees: -

- To collect and analyse existing data
- To establish Protocols for collaboration among agencies

- To develop a Light and Hazardous work list

The Committee has also led a number of campaigns to raise awareness about child labour including an Art Competition and a Video Monologue Competition. The Ministry recently conducted a Social Media Perception Survey about child labour. This E-Survey resulted in 94 suspected cases of child labour. In analysing the data, 34 of the reports provided sufficient intelligence for the conduct of follow-up investigations by the Labour Inspectors. A preliminary review of the data collected indicates that the majority of the reports occurred in the informal sector. These reports identified instances of children selling items on the beach, on the highways, at traffic lights, shopping mall car parks and in agricultural markets. These cases are currently under active investigation by Labour Inspectors.

Based on the success of the first leg of the Social Media Perception Survey, the Ministry embarked on a Social

Media Influencer Campaign which included endorsements by influential persons in Trinidad and Tobago, namely: Mr. Aaron Duncan, young soca icon; Mr. Stephon Felmine, local influencer and Secondary School Teacher, as well as Mr. Kerwin Springer, tutor and CEO, Student Hub. These influencers partnered with the Ministry to produce a video and used their platforms to disseminate the video and engage citizens on the topic of child labour, outlining its effects, promoting the rights of children and the legal age of employment in Trinidad and Tobago. These Ambassadors also assisted in the promotion of the Child Labour Survey which targets Secondary School Students and Adults. This activity coincided with visits by the Labour Inspectors to 4 primary schools to conduct sensitization sessions. This School Campaign has enabled the strengthening of partnerships for a more formalized and joint effort in addressing Child Labour in Trinidad and Tobago.

Interviewing a child suspected of being involved in child labour by Labour Inspectors is a crucial part of the investigative process. The Ministry of Labour is pleased to collaborate with the ILO and the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago to build the capacity of the Labour Inspectorate Unit in the effective investigation of reports of child labour. The Ministry views this engagement with the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, and other stakeholders as a critical aspect in the fight against child labour.

We look forward to your active participation over the next 2 days and to a successful and interactive Workshop. Thank you.