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MEDIA RELEASE

**Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development
participates in Virtual Roundtable discussion on “The World of
Work in a time of Covid-19”**

On Monday 20 April 2020, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) hosted a Virtual Roundtable Discussion aptly titled “The World of Work in a Time of Covid-19.

Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, the Senator the Honourable Jennifer Baptiste Primus participated in the meeting as a panellist on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to this high level discourse, which also included key stakeholders and representatives within the region.

In attendance was the Honourable Vance Amory, of St. Kitts and Nevis, the Minister of Labour, Social Security and Ecclesiastical Affairs with responsibility for Nevis Affairs, President of the Caribbean Employers’ Confederation (CEC), Mr. Wayne Chen, President of the Caribbean Congress of Labour (CCL), Mr. Andre Lewis, Director of the ILO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Mr. Vinicius Carvalho Pinheiro and Director of the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean, Ms. Claudia Coenjaerts.

Discussions were centered on how regional countries are adapting to treating with labour, employment and the socio-economic challenges, which are arising as a result of COVID-19.

Minister Amory of St. Kitts and Nevis and Minister Baptiste Primus



of Trinidad and Tobago, both reported comprehensively, on the Social Support Measures being implemented by their respective countries, which are in line with the four (4) response pillars identified by the ILO: stimulating the economy and employment, supporting enterprise, jobs and incomes, protecting workers in the workplace and relying on social dialogue for solutions.

Additionally, Minister Baptiste Primus spoke of the collaborative approach by government, business and labour to implement health and safety protocols and best practices in a bid to safeguard the health of the labour force. The Minister reiterated that Trinidad and Tobago's Government under the leadership of Prime Minister, Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley M.P., remained committed to prioritizing the health and safety of the population, while making prudent financial decisions to manage the economy during this pandemic.

Minister Baptiste Primus also indicated that Prime Minister, Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley appointed a multipartite twenty-two (22) member committee, of which he is the Chairman, to develop a post COVID-19 road map for Trinidad and Tobago.

In his presentation Minister of Nevis Affairs, Labour and Social Security and Ecclesiastical Affairs, the Honourable Vance Amory highlighted that their economy is heavily dependent on tourism and therefore was particularly hard hit. He said Social Support Measures directed towards employees is being administered through the St. Kitts and Nevis Social Security Board and that support was also being provided to businesses through reduction in corporate tax rates and deferrals of national insurance contributions.



President of the Caribbean Employers Confederation, Mr. Wayne Chen also indicated that many businesses are currently in survival mode as they face significantly reduced or zero income, but continue to have fixed expenses including security costs and loan payments. He said while challenges exist, opportunities also exist, which must be capitalised on including focusing on training and upskilling during this period when some persons find themselves without work.

The President of the Caribbean Congress of Labour, Mr. Andre Lewis made the point that workers are at the forefront of the response to this crisis and that employers must place health before wealth and people before profits.

Additionally, ILO Americas Director, Mr. Vinicius Carvalho, reiterated the need to invest in workers' health in response to the current crisis and also for the future.

ILO Director Caribbean Office, Ms. Claudia Coenjaerts identified six (6) key 'take-aways':

1. This crisis has led to short, medium and long term disruptions in the labour market;
2. Different categories of workers will be most affected such as health care workers and sanitation workers;
3. Employers are in survival mode, and economic diversification and education are key for moving forward;
4. The need to focus on working conditions in this changing working environment;
5. The need to continue to look for opportunities; and
6. Social dialogue is required to achieve each of the above and perhaps needs to be used at a more accelerated level in



the current context.

**For more information on this Virtual Roundtable discussion,
contact the Corporate Communications Unit at
communicationsmolsmed@gov.tt**

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