

Message from Senator the Honourable Jennifer Baptiste Primus on International Day of Co-operatives 2019

Every year, on the first Saturday in July, the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development joins the Global Community in celebrating the International Day of Co-operatives. In its 96th year, the theme "COOPS 4 DECENT WORK" is centred on the premise of Co-operatives as people - centered enterprises, founded on solidarity and members' ownership. The theme also highlights the fact that these local and international organisations continue to prioritise human development and social justice within the workplace. Co-operatives continue to play an imperative role in the creation of decent jobs and the social and economic enablement of local communities.

As Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, I endorse the implementation of Decent Work in every Workspace. Decent Work is the ability to provide opportunities for jobs that are productive and deliver fair income; security in the workplace and social protection for families. This is not only an integral element of Goal 8 of the United Nation's Agenda for Sustainable Development but it is a pertinent part of the Ministry's Vision and by extension the Co-operative Movement of Trinidad and Tobago. It allows for the promotion of better prospects for personal development and social integration; the freedom for people to express their concerns, to organize and to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. It is the realisation of equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and a standard that should be integrated into EVERY Co-operative Society throughout the country.

Under the theme for the 96th year, I take this opportunity to send out a clarion call to the 310 active Co-operative Societies of our Nation to promote equity and inclusion; enable your members to secure their livelihoods, to create decent jobs; and at the same time preserve the Values of the Founding Fathers of the Co-operative Movement - self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality and solidarity. Be attentive to the men and women with disabilities, as well as migrants; facilitate their inclusion in the world of work and integration into society at large. As co-operatives of Trinidad and Tobago, you can play an influential role in efforts to eliminate child labour, forced labour and discrimination at work. Use this as a threshold to build a stronger Trinidad and Tobago.

With an asset base of over 14 billion dollars and a membership in excess of 500,000 members, these engines of economic growth continue to lend to the educational, social and cultural development of the people of our country. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is truly grateful for the contribution that

Co-operatives Societies make and will continue to support the Movement as it adapts to the changing environment in the Co-operative Sector. The Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development has assisted in this transformation, through the development of a National Policy on Co-operatives. This Policy is currently being revised and a policy paper to amend the Co-operatives Societies Act is being finalised. Both policy papers will be subject to consultation with the Co-operative Sector in early September 2019.

Co-operatives of Trinidad and Tobago, I implore you to demonstrate dedication toward your membership and apply that tenacity to a humane approach to business and the building of aspiration of people in their working lives as we strive for Decent Work for Co-operatives.

Happy International Day of Co-operatives.

May God Bless the Cooperative Movement.

May God Bless our Nation.

Senator the Honourable Jennifer Baptiste Primus
Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development