



MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

REMARKS BY

MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY

**MAJOR GENERAL (RET'D) THE HONOURABLE EDMUND
DILLON**

AT

THE CHILDREN'S ARK FUNDRAISING DINNER

Date: Friday, October 23rd 2015

Time: 7pm

Venue: Hyatt Regency, Port of Spain

Your Excellencies,

Former Chief Justice, the Honourable Mr. Justice
Michael De La Bastide;

Acting Commissioner of Police, Mr. Stephen Williams
and Mrs. Williams;

President of the Children's Authority, Mrs. Simone
De La Bastide;

Other Distinguished guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

May it please Your Excellencies and to all a pleasant good evening.

The substantive issue that brings us together tonight – the scourge of human trafficking – it is indeed of great concern to all of us. It is a rapidly expanding global phenomenon, impacting countries and communities throughout the world.

The most vulnerable groups are women and children.

It is a heart wrenching subject matter. A serious and complex issue and unless you have experienced the devastating impact of having a loved one go missing, it would be hard to imagine the tragic consequences, wondering where they are and whether they are safe.

Yet this crime does not exist in a vacuum. It's connected to a host of 21st century National Security challenges.

That is why Trinidad and Tobago must continue to work with our international partners at every level to attack the root causes of trafficking.

In August 2015, the Ministry of National Security, through its Counter Trafficking Unit, began discussions with the Children's Ark and its board members to sensitize them on the work of the Counter Trafficking Unit and the crime of trafficking in children. Under the Trafficking in Persons Act, 2011, "trafficking in children" means the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation, irrespective of the means used so long as the purpose is the exploitation of the child.

These types of exploitation include the production of child pornography, engaging in commercial sex with a minor (person under 18 years of age) and forced labour. The penalty for trafficking in children is a fine of not less than one million dollars and imprisonment for not less than twenty years. Anyone who recruits, transports, transfers, harbours or receives a child for the purpose of exploitation can be charged under this legislation.

The Ministry's Counter Trafficking Unit, since its inception has rescued 23 victims of trafficking and at present, there are 13 persons before the courts on human trafficking charges.

Thus far, there have been no confirmed child victims of trafficking but investigations have been conducted in this regard. Over this past week, we have all witnessed or read reports of the abuse of children in our communities. Children, we all agree need our love, security and protection, and these abhorrent activities as we have seen, along with the likes of exploitation of our children cannot and must not be allowed to occur in our midst.

In addition, the Ministry of National Security is presently engaged in developing a comprehensive National Threat Assessment on the issue of Human Trafficking in Trinidad and Tobago.

Trinidad and Tobago is also signatory to The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Signature September 26, 2001)

- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Signature: September 26, 2001; Ratification: November 6, 2007);

- Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Signature: September 26, 2001; Ratification: November 6, 2007)

Adherence to these protocols would assist this country, to better cooperate, collaborate and effectively contribute towards the elimination of this problem.

Ladies and Gentlemen, no nation can end this crime alone. It cannot be solved by governments alone. The private sector, academic institutions, civil society, the legal community, and consumers can all help to address the factors that allow human trafficking to flourish.

This is why partnerships such as what we are initiating tonight that we hope will shine a light of protection and security on our children. CTU continues to partner with NGOs to raise awareness of human trafficking in Trinidad and Tobago.

I wholeheartedly commend the Children's Ark for taking this stand against Trafficking in Children and wish you continued strength in pursuing your good work.

I end now by reiterating that together is the only way, we can put a stop this terrible crime of human trafficking.

I thank you for your attention and do have a lovely evening.