

First Meeting of the Caribbean Migration Consultations Counter-Trafficking Network

Since 2016, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has facilitated regional cooperation and exchange of information related to migration governance among the countries of the Caribbean through meetings of the Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC). From the very first workshop, held in Port of Spain in December 2016, the topic of human trafficking was highlighted as key priority in the region. The participating countries also endorsed the establishment of thematic networks as a strategy for consolidating the work of the CMC, including the creation of a regional counter-trafficking (CT) network.

In 2000, the international community defined “trafficking in persons” within the *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* and its *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*. Since then, states around the world have become party to the Convention, including in the Caribbean. Seventeen years later, despite important advancements, including the development of specialized responses within police forces, the establishment of multi-sectoral referral systems, and many established good practices and standards, human trafficking remains one of the most complex and harmful crimes faced globally.

An estimated 40.3 million men, women and children are victims of modern slavery according to Alliance 8.7, the UN alliance which aims to support world leaders in their efforts to reach Target 8.7 of the 2030 Agenda, 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.” Survivors of human trafficking suffer important impacts in their health and well-being, and need protection and specialized services. Despite the global efforts, too many victims remain unidentified, or inadequately supported through existing systems, and too many organized criminal groups continue to ruthlessly exploit others to their great profit, despite the efforts of law enforcement. While trafficking in persons can take place within a country, many criminal networks do cross borders, making multi-country cooperation essential. Regional actions to align law enforcement efforts, as well as to improve assistance to victims of trafficking through consulates, child protection and other social service actors, require regional cooperation.

Through the generous support of the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, the **First Meeting of the CMC Counter-Trafficking Network** will be hosted by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in Port of Spain April 26 and 27, 2018, with the support of the International Organization for Migration. The CT Network Meeting will bring together representatives of the existing counter-trafficking response of the English, Spanish, and Dutch speaking Caribbean countries and territories – including multi-sectoral taskforces, committees and coalitions, among others – as well as key experts and partners.

The workshop aims to form a Caribbean-wide counter-trafficking network in order to improve information sharing and regional cooperation to prevent and respond to human trafficking. The two-day event will include discussions of the current human trafficking context in the Caribbean, and of ongoing efforts by states and territories to identify and assist victims as well as to investigate and prosecute traffickers. The workshop will be participatory, with space for the representatives to share information about current efforts and counter-trafficking good practices from their country or territory that can be replicated, as well as to identify gaps and challenges in current regional cooperation. It is expected that the workshop will promote future counter-trafficking cooperation, through identification of the priorities of the CMC Counter-Trafficking Network for future actions and discussions on how the CT Network might continue to work together virtually through the Caribbean Platform for Migration Governance. An outcomes report from the workshop will be developed by IOM and finalized in cooperation with participants, including possible future actions and priorities for continued actions of the CMC Counter-Trafficking Network.