

First Caribbean Network to Fight Human Trafficking meets in Trinidad and Tobago

Port of Spain – 30 experts and government officials from 15 Caribbean states and territories met in Trinidad and Tobago to formalize the first network in this region focused on the fight against human trafficking. The event, which ended today (27/04), served to improve the exchange of information and regional cooperation to prevent and respond to this crime.

This first meeting of the counter-trafficking network was hosted by the government of Trinidad and Tobago and supported by the US State Department Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and the UN Migration Agency (IOM).

The Regional Counter-trafficking Network is one of the first developments of the Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC), a consultative forum of more than 20 governments and 10 international organizations which exchange information and best practices on a wide range of migration issues.

One of the thematic areas addressed by the CMC is human trafficking, a phenomenon that has been identified as a high priority in the region. For this reason, IOM convened those responsible for combating human trafficking in Caribbean countries and territories, including multi-sectoral working groups, committees and taskforces, among others, as well as experts and key partners.

This two-day event included an analysis of the current phenomenon of human trafficking in the Caribbean context, in addition to current responses from countries and territories for the identification and assistance of victims, as well as to investigate and punish human traffickers.

In this workshop, representatives shared information on their current actions and good practices, as well as the gaps and challenges in cooperation at the regional level. They also defined actions that will promote cooperation in the fight against trafficking in the future, through the identification of the priorities of the Counter-Trafficking Network of the CMC and discussions on how the Network could cooperate virtually through the Caribbean Platform for Migration Governance (CPMG).

Like all regions of the world, the Caribbean is affected by human trafficking, both for labour and sexual exploitation. There are no systematic figures of the region (a gap of interest for the network) but globally, it is estimated that 40.3 million people are in a situation of modern slavery, according to Alliance 8.7, a United Nations effort that aims to support world leaders in their efforts to achieve Goal 8.7 of the 2030 Agenda.

Considerable advances have been made in the Caribbean in the fight against trafficking, including development of specialized police units, development of assistance protocols involving multiple sectors, good practices, and minimum standards. However, human trafficking remains one of the most complex and damaging crimes in the region.

"Human trafficking can occur in a country, but many of the criminal networks of traffickers cross borders, making cooperation between countries fundamental. Actions to align investigation and sanction efforts, as well as those to assist victims of trafficking, require, now more than ever, more



regional cooperation initiatives, "said Marcelo Pisani, IOM Regional Director for Central America, North America and the Caribbean.

For more information please contact Jorge Gallo at IOM Regional Office for Central America, North America and the Caribbean, Email: jgallo@iom.int, Tel: +506 221253