



**REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

**STATEMENT ON REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL BY
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE JENNIFER BAPTISTE-PRIMUS**

AT

THE

19TH AMERICAN REGIONAL MEETING

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA

SESSION TIME: 2.00 P.M. TO 5.00 P.M

OCTOBER 2, 2018

Mr President,

It is indeed an honour for me to address this esteemed gathering here today at the 19th American Regional Meeting on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. As we approach the Centenary of this great Institution called the ILO, I wish to reaffirm Trinidad and Tobago's commitment to the Decent Work Agenda and the realization of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The accelerating rate of transformation of the world economy, persistent demographic and technological change, emerging paradigms of production and the rapidly evolving nature of the world of work, certainly presents new opportunities and challenges in the governance of decent work.

It is noteworthy to illustrate the unique existential threats faced by Small Island Developing States in the Caribbean in regard to social, economic and geographical challenges such as limited natural and human capital resources, small and open markets as well as vulnerabilities to natural disasters. In the face of these challenges, we must recognize that the ILO's

mandate in respect of social justice and decent work becomes even more relevant.

In this light, our Meeting presents the distinctive opportunity for hemispheric social partners to consolidate an integrated approach to addressing pertinent labour issues. As we continue to work to promote inclusive growth, sustainable livelihoods and decent work for all, the need for enhanced collaboration and co-operation is therefore indeed underlined.

Mr President, I wish to take this opportunity to commend the Director General on his comprehensive and thought-provoking Report on “Preparing the Future of Work we want in the Americas through Social Dialogue”. This cogently articulated Report delineates key matters germane to the realization of a more prosperous, equitable future with inclusive growth, greater social justice, productive employment and decent work for all across the Americas and the global economy.

As the Report aptly noted, rising levels of informality and non-standard forms of employment constitute a growing trend across the Americas.

Time and time again, the question of how do we regulate and govern “new” types of employment relationships resurfaces. Non-standard forms of employment affect both labour demand and supply, and can pose significant challenges for the operation of regulatory frameworks.

Youth unemployment, labour migration, forced labour and child labour are also emerging issues of concern in today’s contemporary regional economy. According to the Report, the youth unemployment rate experienced a significant increase in 2017 to 19.5 per cent where one in five young people who are looking for work cannot find it. Further, about 27 million of those who do have a job are in situations of informality. These are alarming statistics, illustrating the crucial need to intensify efforts to promote youth employment. Emerging patterns of migration, growing in volume and complexity, are closely related to the search for employment opportunities and for incomes and for this reason requires robust, strategic and collaborative policies and legislation among all actors in the world of work.

It is noteworthy to highlight the progress made by countries of this Region in the global fight against child labour. The ILO estimates indicate that between 2012 and 2016, the region of Latin America and the Caribbean experienced a decrease of 17 per cent in the rate of child labour and 35 per cent in the rate of hazardous child labour. In this light, we must continue our resolve in combatting the scourge of child labour and all other forms of forced and exploitative work.

Policies are therefore needed to ensure that all types of work arrangements constitute decent work, as no contractual form is immune to the ongoing transformations in the world of work. It is thus incumbent on governments, as well as employers, workers and their organizations, through national, regional and international efforts, to focus on these challenges in the context of the future of work, with the goal of promoting decent work for all.

I am pleased to take this opportunity to illustrate just a few recent accomplishments of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago in promoting social dialogue, freedom of association, social security and

decent work for all. Reflecting on the ongoing need to update labour legislation to meet the requirements of international labour standards, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has embarked on an impressive labour legislative reform process via a national tripartite consultative process.

Key instruments include the Industrial Relations Act, Chapter 88:01; Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, chapter 88:13; the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Chapter 88:08, to name a few. We also implemented a comprehensive National Workplace Policy on HIV and Aids for Trinidad and Tobago as well as successfully executed public sensitization programmes to address child labour and to promote the rights of domestic workers. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago is also in the process of developing national policies on labour migration, the elimination of child labour, a National Employment Standards Policy Framework and on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace.

In the spirit of regional cooperation, we will continue to collaborate with our fellow Caribbean Community Members and our hemispheric partners

across the Latin American and Americas Region. As we look to the future, I am optimistic that our Region will continue to be strengthened as we stand united and committed to achieving our shared development objectives.

In closing, I hope we can all embrace the inspiring words of the recently deceased Mr Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations and I quote, “More than ever before in human history, we share a common destiny. We can master it only if we face it together”.

I thank you.