



REMARKS BY
SENATOR THE HONOURABLE DONNA COX
**MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
AND FAMILY SERVICES**

**FOOD VOUCHER DISTRIBUTION
CEREMONY**

**RED CROSS SOCIETY
HEADQUARTERS**

**WRIGHTSON ROAD
PORT OF SPAIN**

TUESDAY DECEMBER 5, 2023

10:00 AM

SALUTATIONS:

- His Excellency Fang Qiu - Chinese Ambassador to Trinidad & Tobago;
- Mrs. Lenor Baptiste-Simmons - Permanent Secretary-Ministry of Social Development and Family Services;
- Ms. Jill De Bourg - President of Trinidad & Tobago Red Cross Society;
- Representatives of the Peoples Republic of China;
- Representatives of the Trinidad & Tobago Red Cross Society;
- Specially Invited Guests;
- Members of the Media;
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning and Seasons Greetings!

I am happy to join you this morning, for what I consider, a gesture of generosity. As we commence this food voucher distribution initiative to one hundred and thirty-eight (138) vulnerable and deserving families, I must commend His Excellency Fang Qiu, the Chinese Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago for initiating and driving this project that touches the homes of persons across Trinidad and Tobago. The hosting of this event on the United Nation's International Volunteer Day, which is observed annually on December 5, is also very strategic. I recognize the valuable work of every volunteer here and encourage everyone present to applaud them.

Today's ceremony reflects the value and necessity of partnerships and relationships in ensuring that the basic needs of as many vulnerable citizens are being met.

I am pleased to learn that the beneficiaries selected to receive these food vouchers reside throughout Trinidad and Tobago and that additional distribution ceremonies will take place in the coming weeks. This gesture of kindness and giving, ladies and gentlemen, will not only provide sustenance to those facing difficult times, but also demonstrate the compassion and solidarity that define us as a Nation. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, *"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."* This is exactly what is being done today in a collective and collaborative fashion.

In the face of socio-economic uncertainties and challenges, it is the duty of the Government to stand beside its citizens. In this regard, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services has been actively engaging in steps to develop a **National Register of Vulnerable Persons in Trinidad and Tobago.**

The Register will be a cutting-edge database to collect, store and process information related to ALL vulnerable individuals, groups and families residing in Trinidad and Tobago. This data gathering will help us to have a more targeted approach to helping, empowering and transforming the lives of poor and vulnerable persons in this country. The Ministry intends to launch this project in the near future, and we are confident that future partnerships with both the Chinese Embassy and the Red Cross Society of Trinidad and Tobago will bring additional help to the poor and vulnerable in our society.

In closing, I take this opportunity to again applaud Ambassador Fang Qiu, and representatives of the Embassy of the Peoples Republic of China for their vision in starting this drive today. I also encourage persons across Trinidad and Tobago to be our brothers' keepers and give a hamper to someone you know who may not have a meal to eat.

Let us recommit ourselves to creating a society where every member can thrive, regardless of their circumstances. I look forward to our continued partnership in the future as we serve our vulnerable - helping, empowering and transforming their lives.

I thank you.