



## MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Minister of Social Development and Family Services receives courtesy call from UNICEF Country Representative**

Port-of-Spain --- Minister of Social Development and Family Services, Senator The Honourable Donna Cox, received a courtesy call from Mr. Pieter Bult, Representative of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Eastern Caribbean Area Office in Barbados at the Ministry's Head Office on St Vincent Street, Port of Spain on October 11, 2022. The meeting formed part of the Minister's ongoing strategy to form alliances and collaborate with various Missions and Embassies towards a more responsive and multifaceted social services delivery. Also in attendance were Permanent Secretaries at the Ministry, Jacqueline Johnson and Sheila Seecharan; Social Policy Manager, Celine Felix; and Social Policy Officer, Jemmimah Wilson, both from UNICEF.

The meeting included cordial discussions on the relations between the Ministry and UNICEF and outlined inter alia, some of the planned programmes, projects, and initiatives of the Ministry. Among these included the impending digitalization of social services and the need to transition persons from dependence to independence.

Minister Cox took the opportunity to provide pertinent information about the Ministry's various programmes and services, particularly those available to families. According to Minister Cox, "The Ministry wants to work closer with families. Family plays an important role because they're the first socializers. We recognize how serious parenting is in society, as crime and violence in schools often stem from social issues and poor parenting skills." The Minister further expounded on the importance of the Ministry's Parenting and Grandparenting Programmes, stating that these workshops sought to equip parents with the parenting skills and knowledge needed to meet the unique needs of their children.

Minister Cox also informed Mr Bult of the Ministry's digitalization efforts and ongoing projects, inclusive of the National Registry for Vulnerable Persons (NRVP). The Register is intended to be a cutting-edge, computerized database which will be used to collect, store, and process vital information on vulnerable persons across our Twin-island Republic, on one single platform. It forms part of the policy and research agenda for the MSDFS aimed at addressing critical policy gaps in the Ministry as well as ensuring that decision-making is data-driven, and no one is left behind.

In response, Mr Bult indicated that it was his intention to maintain an excellent working relationship with the Ministry, particularly where children and families were concerned. He also shared some of the planned initiatives to be undertaken by the UNICEF and the Children Fund in the future. He also emphasized on the importance of joint case management systems, to help identify vulnerable families who have little to no access to social protection programmes.

In closing, both parties agreed that collaboration is key, particularly in times of uncertainty.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remains committed to enhancing the lives of vulnerable citizens.

**-END-**

**For more information:**

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Minister Cox and Mr Pieter Bult, Representative of the UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Area Office in Barbados discuss social protection systems.



Minister Cox, Mr Pieter Bult, Representative of the UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Area Office in Barbados and Celine Felix, Social Policy Manager.



Minister Cox extends her gratitude to Mr Pieter Bult, Representative of the UNICEF Eastern Caribbean Area Office in Barbados.