



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**Ministry of Social Development and Family Services**

**MEDIA RELEASE**



**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Priority: HIGH**

**MSFDS Participates in Down Syndrome Conference**

**Port of Spain-** Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services, delivered greetings today at the Down Syndrome Family Network's Annual Conference, held in observance of World Down Syndrome Day, observed globally on March 21st. This significant day celebrates the unique qualities symbolized by the three copies of the 21st chromosome, embodying diversity and resilience. Under the theme "End Stereotypes," this year's Conference echoes the human rights principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

In her speech, Minister Cox reaffirmed the Ministry's unwavering commitment to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly focusing on the needs of individuals with disabilities. She emphasized, *"we at the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services will not be voiceless nor out of tune in the defence and promotion of persons with disabilities. We will not lack the words and above all, the tangible gestures for encountering and welcoming people with disabilities."*

Minister Cox also highlighted recent strides in accessibility, notably the forthcoming Corporate Headquarters of the Ministry, which has a proposed design to ensuring accessibility for all individuals, including those with disabilities.

Providing updates on the progress of the Trinidad and Tobago Disabilities Bill, Minister Cox acknowledged the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders, including government ministries, statutory bodies, non-governmental organizations, and persons with disabilities themselves. She urged attendees to, *"remain steadfast in their collective efforts to challenge and eradicate stereotypes regarding the capabilities of individuals with Down Syndrome, and all persons with disabilities."*

She ended by congratulating the Down Syndrome Family Network for their consistency, as an NGO, in advocating for the rights of Persons with Disabilities. Additionally, the Ministry showcased a booth at the conference, featuring comprehensive information on available grants and services.



Other speakers at the conference included Mrs. Sharon Clarke Rowley, Attorney at Law and wife of Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, and Ms. Nicole Flynn, a successful entrepreneur, Associate Consultant with People Minded Business Inc. (PMB), and accomplished athlete with Down Syndrome. A Posthumous Special Tribute was also paid to Mrs. Helen Humphrey, former Director of the National Association for Down Syndrome. Mr Nathan Rowe, Programme Director, Down Syndrome International, UK presented on Health Equity- How Disability Legislation ensures equity.

The Ministry of Social Development and Family Services remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting and uplifting the community of persons with disabilities, including those with Down Syndrome.

**-END-**

**For more information:**

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*Senator the Honourable Donna Cox, Minister of Social Development and Family Services, delivers greetings at the Down Syndrome Family Network's Annual Conference, held in observance of World Down Syndrome Day*



*Minister Cox and self-advocate Ms Nicole Flynn take a photo at the 12<sup>th</sup> United Nations World Down Syndrome Day DSFN Conference.*





*Minister Cox is joined by (l-r) Glen Niles, Chairman and Founder of the Down Syndrome Family Network; Mrs. Sharon Clarke Rowley, Attorney at Law and wife of Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley; Ms. Nicole Flynn, Self-Advocate; Rochelle Persad; Ms Lisa Ghany Honorary Director of the Down Syndrome Family Network and Tyrese Niles.*



*Minister Cox takes a photo with Ms. Nicole Flynn, Self-Advocate (fourth from left) and relatives of Mrs. Helen Humphrey. Ms. Humphrey was posthumously honoured with a special tribute for her contributions to Down syndrome advocacy.*