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TO: NEWS EDITORS – For Immediate Release

CHAMBER'S VIEWS ON MINISTER'S STATEMENT THAT PUBLIC RELEASE OF MURDER STATISTICS TO THE MEDIA SHOULD CEASE

The Chamber is deeply concerned by Minister Warner's statement that crime statistics should not be revealed to the media, as an interim measure for curbing crime. .

We however commend Acting Police Commissioner Stephen Williams for quickly restoring the balance between the Constitutional power of the Minister of National Security to direct Government policy and the Commissioner's statutory power to manage and operate the Police Service, through his confirmation of the legal right of all to these statistics. The Chamber also welcomes the very timely concurrence by the Police Service Commission with the views expressed by the Commissioner. The response of these is critical in maintaining the expected openness, transparency and accountability required at this time. The ability of citizens to receive and have access to information plays an important role in citizen awareness and holding public office holders to account.

That said, we do agree with the Minister, however, that the sensitive information concerning murders should not be allowed to be used for the purposes of sensationalism, as this may ultimately cause a negative and perhaps distorted view of the extent and nature of the crime situation in T&T. We believe that the nation's focus should be on developing and engaging in sustainable crime fighting solutions, and so we must not allow this opportunity to pass without calling on all citizens to do all they can to desist from continuing to be part of the problem and, instead, become part of the solution.

While we recognise that the Minister made a subsequent public apology with an attempt to clarify the matter, this is a story which has been prominently shown on the international news circuit. Given our attempts to attract Foreign Direct Investment and improve our national competitiveness, politicians must be mindful of the possible negative fallout their utterances may have on our international image.

The nation is still reeling from the Section 34 issue, which has dealt a serious blow to the perception of good governance practices in T&T. The Chamber wants to see an ease in the escalation of crime, but we also wish that our public officials would be committed to finding the balance between seeking solutions to important national issues and demonstrating responsible governance.