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June 27, 2014

TO: NEWS EDITORS – For Immediate Release

CHAMBER VIEWS SHUTDOWN OF IMMIGRATION OFFICES AN AD-HOC AND DISRUPTIVE APPROACH; URGES MORE DIALOGUE

The Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce once again views with dismay the news that the Immigration Office at San Fernando now joins its Port of Spain counterpart in being shut down by the Public Services Association for an indeterminate length of time.

As previously stated, the Chamber remains concerned with the ongoing interruption to the provision of essential Government services. The complete shutdown of Immigration services, in particular the office where passports are produced, not only disrupts the business community which requires such services for work-related matters, but it also causes major upset to the wider public for purposes of travel or student visas.

The Chamber continues to be of the view that in any work environment, if there are deficiencies in compliance with the OSH Act, the employer must be responsible for correcting these in a proactive manner and ensure that all employees are working under safe conditions, as provided under the OSH Act.

We recall that the Government announced in May that OSH issues identified at the Immigration and Board of Inland Revenue Buildings were to be tackled in the short-term. The Chamber calls for some update as to the current status of the repairs, with a view to understanding the timeline for completion of works.

We are also concerned that other essential public services have remained, for months, not operating at full capacity, due to OSH issues.

However, while we understand the plight of the affected workers, we maintain that all parties on both sides must act responsibly and in the best interest of all of our nation's citizens in reaching a resolution to these matters. We expect that dialogue continues and offices, such as the Immigration Office, will remain open and serve members of the public while the issues are being dealt with. We expect the Union will honour any agreements made for staff to perform their duties while any works are being completed, and we expect that the Government will honour its obligations to do what is necessary to provide a safe environment for their employees.

We do not, however, support an ad-hoc and disruptive approach to resolving this issue, as is being undertaken by this current complete shutdown.

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