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TO: NEWS EDITORS – For Immediate Release

CHAMBER VIEWS ON THE LIFSPORT PROGRAMME – THE BUCK MUST STOP WITH OUR NATION'S LEADERS

The Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce has attentively followed the reported allegations of misconduct within and mismanagement of the Life Sport Programme over the last few weeks. Following the receipt of the Report of the Central Audit Committee on the Comprehensive Audit of the Payment System of the LifeSport Programme last Friday, we must, at the onset, commend the Honourable Prime Minister, for her action to immediately announce the end of the programme and instruct the Attorney General to forward the Report to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and the Commissioner of Police (Acting) for investigation.

However, we are greatly concerned and alarmed at the many discrepancies which were identified in the Report, including poor control and management of the Programme by the Ministry of Sport; instances of fraudulent activity by suppliers; and even possible breaches of the Proceeds of Crime Act. Based on these serious findings, the Chamber calls for all responsible to make every resource available to allow for a thorough investigation to be conducted in a timely manner and that any and **all** persons found responsible for any misconduct will be charged and prosecuted to the fullest extent the law allows. The Chamber believes that transparency and accountability are imperative where the management and disbursement of public funds are concerned. Good leadership and governance dictates that those charged with this responsibility be vigilant in the execution of their duties, and accountable to the public where there are any allegations of misconduct. The buck must stop with our nation's leaders – in both the public and private sector.

Additionally, the Chamber agrees wholeheartedly with the Prime Minister that this Report underscores the urgent need for Procurement Laws to become fully operationalised. The Chamber, as part of the Private Sector Civil Society Group (PSCSG), has made this same call to the Prime Minister in its recently published advertisement of July 25. We understand that Parliament will go on recess by the end of July and are yet to ascertain whether any provision will be made for the debate and passing of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property

Bill prior to this closure. We urge the Prime Minister and the wider government to debate this Bill with the urgency it deserves and not allow it to lapse.

The Chamber will continue to monitor this issue and, as with the wider national community, await the outcome of the investigations.

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