



**Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**

Ministries of Homeland Security and Justice

## **Government Introduces Dissuasion Commissions to Strengthen National Drug Response**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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**June 24, 2026**

The Ministries of Homeland Security and Justice, in collaboration with the National Drug Council (NDC) and the Cooperation Programme between Latin America and the Caribbean (COPOLAD), hosted the Opening Ceremony for the presentation of the Toolkit and the initial launch of the implementation of the Dissuasion Commissions in Trinidad and Tobago on Tuesday June 23 2026. The initiative marks an important step in advancing a more balanced and evidence-informed national approach to addressing substance use.

This engagement forms part of a broader, strategic effort by the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to strengthen its national response to substance use and public safety challenges through a balanced, evidence-informed approach that integrates public safety, justice reform, and public health considerations.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General, underscored the need for collaboration in successfully implementing the initiative and encouraged all participants to engage openly, share their experiences, and contribute their expertise.

*“The strength of the Dissuasion Commission lies precisely in its multidisciplinary nature. It requires coordinated action across law enforcement, health services, social support systems, policymakers, and community partners. All of you here have a vital role in governing this alternative pathway safely,”* he continued. *“Remember that behind every policy, file, and case number is a human being.”*

In remarks delivered during the opening ceremony, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Homeland Security, Dr Wilson Henderson Jr., also emphasised the importance of strengthening early intervention mechanisms alongside ongoing enforcement efforts.

Dr. Henderson reaffirmed the Ministry of Homeland Security's commitment to a balanced national drug strategy, noting that, *“The challenges associated with drugs cannot be addressed through enforcement measures alone.”* He added that, *“a comprehensive national response must also include pathways for treatment, rehabilitation, and reintegration, particularly for individuals who may benefit from early intervention.”*

The proposed Dissuasion Commission is intended to provide an alternative pathway for suitable individuals, allowing for early assessment and referral to treatment and support services before matters progress further into the criminal justice system. The initiative is designed to complement existing law enforcement and judicial processes by promoting proportionate, targeted, and effective responses.

The discussions and outcomes from this engagement will contribute to strengthening the evidence base and institutional coordination required to support the development of the 2026–2030 National Drug Plan. The insights gained from the technical sessions, stakeholder consultations, and review of the proposed Dissuasion Commission model will help inform future policy direction, particularly in advancing a coordinated national approach that integrates supply reduction, demand reduction, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and reintegration measures.

As implementation progresses, the Government will continue working with national, regional and international partners to develop evidence-based policies that reduce the harms associated with substance use, strengthen community resilience, and enhance public safety for all citizens.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to strengthening public safety while promoting approaches that support rehabilitation, reduce recidivism, and build safer, more resilient communities.



***Photo 1: Dissuasion Commission Launch Stakeholder Photo - The Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General, along with various stakeholders, pictured at the Opening Ceremony for the Presentation of the Toolkit and Initial Launch for the Implementation of the Dissuasion Commissions at the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.***



**Photo 2:** L-R - Ms Ayanna Clarke, Permanent Secretary (ag.) from the Ministry of Justice, Ms Trudy Lewis, Permanent Secretary (ag.) from the Ministry of Justice, Dr Wilson Henderson Jr., Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Homeland Security, The Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General, Her Excellency Ambassador Cécile Tassin, Ambassador of the European Union to Trinidad and Tobago and EU representatives, Laura Mula Gallego, Project Officer at COPOLAD, Mr Diego Calatayuh Soriano, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain, and Mr Frank Josselin, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the French Republic pictured at the at the Opening Ceremony for the Presentation of the Toolkit and Initial Launch for the Implementation of the Dissuasion Commissions at the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.



**Photo 3:** Her Excellency Ambassador Cécile Tassin, Ambassador of the European Union to Trinidad and Tobago and the Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General at the Opening Ceremony for the Presentation of the Toolkit and Initial Launch for the Implementation of the Dissuasion Commissions.



***Photo 4: L-R - Claudia Romero Estévez, COPOLAD Consultant; Joana Alves, ICAD Representative and Member of the Commission of the Dissuasion of Drug Addiction in Braga, Portugal; Ambassador Cécile Tassin, Ambassador of the European Union to Trinidad and Tobago; the Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General; Laura Mula Gallego, Programme Officer, COPOLAD; Shedy Plaza Carcelen, Logistics Officer, COPOLAD.***