



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Public Administration and Communications

Statement - World Press Freedom Day

By

Honourable Maxie Cuffie

Minister of Public Administration and Communications

I am happy to join the local media fraternity, media organisations and the rest of the world in commemorating World Press Freedom Day 2016, the theme of which is “Access to Information and Fundamental Freedoms. This is your right.” Human rights and constitutional provisions such as freedom of information, freedom of expression and freedom of the press are also inextricably linked to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal #16 which aims to “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”

Freedom of the press and access to information are pivotal to ensuring that nations remain democratic and facilitate some level of participatory democracy and the involvement of our citizens in the democratic processes. Chapter 1, Part 1, Section 4 of our country’s Constitution highlights the “Recognition and Protection of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms” which includes freedom of the press. Evidently, the media plays an important role; not only as a facilitator but as a defender of our democracy.

In its 2016 World Press Freedom Index, Journalists Without Borders placed Trinidad and Tobago as 44th (out of 180 countries) with a score of 23.29. This score places this country in the “Satisfactory” category. We believe that we can do better to achieve a higher ranking and it is for this reason the Government will continue to uphold the tenets enshrined in our body of laws, so that our journalists and other media workers are allowed to conduct their jobs freely and without any interference from Government.

The Government understands that as a nation, we are evolving and developing. Consequently, we will continue to pursue all channels to strengthen the link between democracy and media. Over our term, specific emphasis will be placed on the “Whistleblower” legislation and the review of the Telecommunications Act and Freedom of Information Act. Government also resolves to treat all media equitably as it moves to reduce the influence of state media.

The media is a key partner for us, as a Government and more specifically for the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications as we strive to (among other things) create, store and disseminate information and to provide credible and proactive communication across Government and to the country.

C O R P O R A T E C O M M U N I C A T I O N S D I V I S I O N

Level 5 - National Library Building, Corner Hart and Abercromby Streets, Port-of-Spain,
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies

Tel: (868) 625-6724 Ext 2301/ 2083 Fax: (868) 623-8636

www.mpa.gov.tt

On this day, May 03, 2016, I underscore and re-affirm my commitment to ensuring that we continue to work together to facilitate a free and fair media in Trinidad and Tobago. Happy World Press Freedom Day to my colleagues!

Honourable Maxie Cuffie, M.P.
Minister of Public Administration and Communications

About World Press Freedom Day (www.unesco.org)

Every year, 3 May is a date which celebrates the fundamental principles of press freedom; to evaluate press freedom around the world, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession. Over 100 national celebrations take place each year to commemorate this Day. UNESCO leads the worldwide celebration by identifying the global thematic and organizing the main event in different parts of world every year. The international day was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1993 following a Recommendation adopted at the 26th Session of UNESCO's General Conference in 1991. This in turn was a response to a call by African journalists who in 1991 produced the landmark Windhoek Declaration on media pluralism and independence.

###

For further information, please contact:

Natasha Brown, Senior Corporate Communications Officer –
623 4724 ext 2300 / BrownN@mpa.gov.tt

C O R P O R A T E C O M M U N I C A T I O N S D I V I S I O N

Level 5 - National Library Building, Corner Hart and Abercromby Streets, Port-of-Spain,
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, West Indies

Tel: (868) 625-6724 Ext 2301/ 2083 Fax: (868) 623-8636

www.mpa.gov.tt