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MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

ODPM AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS PLAN FOR THE UPCOMING WET/HURRICANE SEASON IN THE COVID-19 CONTEXT

Trinidad and Tobago's Wet/Hurricane Season begins on June 1st 2020, and already, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) along with some of its critical stakeholder agencies, which are involved in relief and recovery operations have begun preparing for it. In this regard, on **Wednesday 29th April 2020** the ODPM held an initial strategy planning and preparation session at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC).

This year's upcoming Hurricane Season has been predicted to be an above-normal one and mixed in with the presence of COVID-19, the ODPM recognises that there is a dire need for Trinidad and Tobago to be in an even stronger state of readiness than previously.

The COVID-19 Pandemic is impacting many nations across the globe, and a paradigm shift has occurred in the manner in which people interact daily. For example, one such shift is the requirement for social distancing. This consideration, along with the potential impacts of adverse weather conditions, will undoubtedly pose a challenge for response and support agencies in 2020.

At the meeting, stakeholders were presented with a hurricane impact scenario that required critical and creative thinking around the **complexities posed by the COVID-19 environment**. Some of the key areas discussed were:

- Disaster relief and recovery operations
- Evacuation operations and protocols
- Search and rescue operations
- Shelter management observing physical distancing requirements
- Medical support and isolation requirements
- Humanitarian assistance and relief distribution

The CEO of the ODPM, Major General (Ret'd) Rodney Smart chaired the interactive session. Also in attendance were Mr. Jerry David and Ms. Haze-Ann Cummings of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Development; Ms Patti-Ann Williams of the Ministry of Health; Mr Troy Pollonais and Ms Deidra Sampson of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, Mr. Stephan Kishore of the Trinidad and Tobago Red Cross Society, along with Mr Navindra Persad and Mr Eric Mackie of the ODPM.

Stakeholders having grappled with the challenges of disaster management alongside the COVID-19 experience, will now revise their Agencies' emergency plans and procedures, which will now feed into the National Response Plan.

The meeting also reiterated the need for citizens, while contending with the pandemic, to utilise the time at home to begin personal preparations for the upcoming Wet/Hurricane Season, as well as the other hazards that may befall us. Notwithstanding the nation's current and potential challenges, together as a nation, we can reduce the spread of COVID-19 and minimise the impact of adverse weather and other hazards on our society.

Photo and Caption



Photo and Caption 1: Key stakeholders, while observing social-distancing, discuss the Wet/Hurricane Season alongside COVID-19 considerations, on Wednesday 29th April, 2020 at the ODPM's National Emergency Operations Centre.

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