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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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**For Immediate Release**

### ***ODPM PREPARES PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS FOR THE WET AND HURRICANE SEASONS***

In preparation for what has been described as above normal Wet and Hurricane Seasons, the ODPM on **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020** accomplished an historic undertaking by conducting a national level, blended, disaster simulation exercise for representatives of the Private Sector, Civil Society and international assistance providers, represented by the US Embassy.

Managed from the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) at Tacarigua, the exercise simulated a Category 4 Hurricane impacting Trinidad and Tobago, causing extensive flooding and wind damage to businesses and residential properties, resulting in persons being evacuated to shelters.

Over 25 of the biggest name brands, identified for their ability to assist in national disaster preparedness and relief, participated either live or virtually in what was the 5<sup>th</sup> in a series of Whole of Society simulation exercises. The ODPM is using these exercises to prepare societal bodies in the event of any weather-related emergency, while educating persons about the National Response Framework, the protocols for national level disaster response.

In the first phase of the exercise, participants were challenged to think how they were going to prepare their own organisations for the slow onset weather event and the adequacy of their continuity of operations plans. Later, attendees had to critically consider how they could support the national effort, to provide relief to displaced persons both in Trinidad and Tobago, while ensuring the safety of their staff given the health concerns posed by COVID-19.

Organisations were placed in 5 working groups based on their capabilities to provide cooked meals, foodstuff, accommodation, transportation and warehousing, and coordination. This first-time initiative provided a platform for a more integrated approach to strengthening relationships and actions, which ultimately could lead to speedier and more structured delivery of disaster relief to affected individuals and vulnerable populations.

The CEO of the ODPM, Major General (Ret'd) Rodney Smart, underscored the value of the day's training and expressed his appreciation to attendees for their active participation and vital contributions. He stressed that disaster management is everyone's business and it is through strong Public, Private and International Partnerships, that our nation would be better prepared and capable of building back faster and stronger, in the event of a disaster. The CEO ended by inviting interested individuals and organisations to offer their services to the ODPM, so that Trinidad and Tobago would become an even more disaster ready and resilient nation.

## Photos and Caption



**Photo and Caption 1:** CEO of the ODPM, Major General (Ret'd) Rodney Smart, engages virtual and in-person attendees at the 5<sup>th</sup> disaster relief simulation exercise. This exercise was planned specially for representatives of the Private Sector, Civil Society and international bodies, which were represented by the US Embassy.



**Photo and Caption 2:** Mr. Jaishima Gowandan of the ODPM and Colonel Claudia Carrizales of the US Embassy along with physical and virtual representatives of the Private Sector and Civil Society Organisations, working out solutions to a simulated Category 4 hurricane, from the NEOC at Tacarigua.

**END**

**Issued by:**

*Public Information, Education and Community Outreach Unit*