



NEWS RELEASE

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Monday December 9, 2013

MINISTER FALCONER IN T&T FOR REGIONAL MEETING ON ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY

Minister without Portfolio (Information) in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Senator Sandra Falconer is in Trinidad and Tobago where she is participating in a High-Level Meeting spearheaded by CARICOM and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) exploring opportunities and challenges in addressing adolescent pregnancy in the Caribbean.

Minister Falconer will chair a session of the Meeting which will examine the issue of adolescent pregnancy in the Caribbean within the context for multi-stakeholder action.

The one day meeting brings together senior officials in government, representatives of UN agencies including Ambassador John Ashe, President of the 68th Session of the UN General Assembly and Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of the UNFPA, and civil society partners from across the region,

Minister Falconer who is accompanied by Dr. Zoe Simpson, Acting Executive Director of the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation (WCJF) will discuss the work, achievements and lessons learnt by the WCJF in carrying out its mandate with specific reference to adolescent pregnancy in Jamaica. The WCJF is an agency within the purview of the OPM charged with improving opportunities for teen mothers through continued education, counseling and training. Since its establishment in 1978, the WCJF has achieved significant success as measured through the low numbers of repeat pregnancies (under 2%) and the number of girls who attend the Centre and complete their secondary level education.

At the recent meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (CHSOD) held in May 2013, adolescent pregnancy was identified as a priority area and a Task Force was commissioned to develop and monitor an action plan to address this issue. It was recognized that, despite the reduction in overall birth rates and teen pregnancy within the Caribbean region, the rate of teenage pregnancy, especially among the poorer socio-economic groups, remains unacceptably high. Adolescent pregnancy also remains a major health and development challenge for the region.

The Government of Jamaica through the Ministry of Education recently adopted a policy on the re-integration of teenage mothers into the formal school system. The Policy is aimed at ensuring that the education of these girls continues despite pregnancy and so that they may become productive citizens contributing to national development.

Minister Falconer will return to the island on Tuesday (December 10) and the cost of this trip is being covered by the UNFPA.

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