Minister Maharaj Delivers Feature Address at Launch of Restorative Justice Executive Masterclass

MEDIA RELEASE

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The Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General, delivered the feature address on Wednesday, October 28, 2026, at the launch of the Executive Masterclass on Restorative Justice for Criminal Offences, hosted by the Faculty of Law of the University of the West Indies (UWI), St. Augustine, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Trinidad and Tobago. The Masterclass is funded by the European Union under the Partnership of the Caribbean and European Union on Justice (PACE Justice) Project.

The launch was held at the University Inn and Conference Centre, UWI, St. Augustine, bringing together justice sector leaders, practitioners and policymakers to begin a three-day programme aimed at strengthening the capacity of criminal justice sector agencies to apply restorative justice as a practical tool for reform and to help reduce the backlog of criminal cases.

Delivering the feature address, Minister Maharaj described the launch as a deliberate shift in how Trinidad and Tobago understands and administers justice. He emphasised that restorative justice complements the formal justice system rather than replacing it, and highlighted the Government's legislative reforms on victims' rights, parole, probation and criminal records as the foundation for a more victim-centred, rehabilitative and inclusive approach to justice.

"Restorative Justice is not a retreat from justice. It is a deepening of it. A justice system that punishes without repairing, that convicts without restoring, and that forgets the victim in the pursuit of the verdict, is incomplete. We are building something more complete," the Minister stated.

The Minister also underscored the importance of translating legislative reform into practical outcomes, noting that restorative justice provides the methods and processes needed to turn these principles into meaningful change.

Her Excellency Cécile Tassin, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, also delivered remarks, noting that restorative programmes give victims a voice while easing pressure on the legal system, and that the European Union is proud to support the partnership.

“The true measure of our society is not how hard we punish, but how effectively we heal,” Ambassador Tassin said.

The opening ceremony was attended by His Excellency Anthony Carmona, former President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and was chaired by Mrs. Sharifa Ali-Abdullah, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP Trinidad and Tobago Multi-Country Office. Dr. Alicia Elias-Roberts, Dean of the Faculty of Law, UWI, St. Augustine, described the Masterclass as a pioneering initiative between UWI and the UNDP, and Mr. Ugo Blanco, Resident Representative, UNDP Trinidad and Tobago Multi-Country Office, underscored that justice is about repairing harm and rehabilitating people. Also present were UWI deans, heads of departments, faculty and staff, facilitators, participants, UNDP colleagues and specially invited guests.

The Ministry of Justice continues to support initiatives that strengthen the capacity of the justice sector, advance rehabilitation and reintegration, and promote a more responsive and effective criminal justice system.

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Photo 1: The Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General, delivers the feature address at the launch of the Executive Masterclass on Restorative Justice for Criminal Offences.



Photo 2: From left to right: Dr. Alicia Elias-Roberts, Dean, Faculty of Law, The UWI, St. Augustine; 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; His Excellency Anthony Carmona, former President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; and Mr. Ugo Blanco, Resident Representative, UNDP Trinidad and Tobago, Multi Country Office attend the launch of the Executive Masterclass on Restorative Justice for Criminal Offences at the University Inn and Conference Centre, UWI, St. Augustine.



Photo 3: From left to right: Ms Lisa Pargass-Mohammed, Assistant Chief Probation Officer (Ag.); the Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General; Ms Shervonne Bruno-Pierre, Chief Probation Officer (Ag.) attend the launch of the Executive Masterclass on Restorative Justice for Criminal Offences at the University Inn and Conference Centre, UWI, St. Augustine.



Photo 4: Attendees at the launch of the Executive Masterclass on Restorative Justice for Criminal Offences at the University Inn and Conference Centre, UWI, St. Augustine look on as Mrs. Sharifa Ali-Abdullah, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP Trinidad and Tobago, Multi Country Office, introduces the panel.



Photo 5: His Excellency Anthony Carmona, former President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, greets the Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General.



Photo 6: From left to right: Her Excellency Ambassador Cécile Tassin, Ambassador of the European Union to Trinidad and Tobago; His Excellency Anthony Carmona, former President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago; the Honourable Devesh Maharaj, Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General; and Mr. Ugo Blanco, Resident Representative, UNDP Trinidad and Tobago, Multi Country Office, attend the launch of the Executive Masterclass on Restorative Justice for Criminal Offences at the University Inn and Conference Centre, UWI, St. Augustine.