



INDUSTRIAL COURT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

All Editors in Chief, Head of News

MEDIA RELEASE

Industrial Court's Meet with the Court Symposium 2023

The Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago hosted the seventh installment of the Meet with the Court Symposium, on Saturday 10th June 2023 at the Port of Spain Ballroom of the Hyatt Regency Trinidad, Wrightson Road, Port of Spain. This was the first time since 2018, the Industrial Court hosted the event.

This Symposium which has become the flagship event of the Industrial Court, provides a platform for the Court to meet with stakeholders and experts to discuss current issues of industrial relations and the global labour market. The Symposium encourages participants to engage in open discussion on the industrial relations climate and to discuss trends in the labour market.

This year, the theme of the Meet with the Court Symposium was “**The Labour Market and Industrial Relations Post-COVID-19**”. A team of experts discussed labour relations, the current state of the labour market and the legislative framework post COVID-19. The day's proceedings was moderated by Senator Dr. Paul Richards. Her Honour Mrs. Deborah Thomas-Felix, President of the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago, welcomed participants and stated in her opening remarks that, “*Before the pandemic, the ILO's Global Commission on the Future of Work was established to undertake an in-depth examination on the future of work that can provide the analytical basis for the delivery of social justice in the 21st Century. The COVID-19 Pandemic propelled us here in the Caribbean, like the rest of the world, into the digital age and into extensive reform on working methods. Post pandemic, there are several converging trends which have profound impacts on all aspects of work, this, of course, has implications for employees, unions, businesses and society in general.*”

Senior and renowned economist Dr. Shelton Nicholls kicked off the discussions with a look at “**Post -pandemic Global Economic Trends: Implications for the Labour Market in Trinidad and Tobago**”. He underscored some critical concerns in the labour market:

- The potential for an increase in informal employment
- Slower pace of growth in labour productivity
- Reduced job prospects for young people
- Growing skill mismatch and change in corporate skill mix
- Widening of the gender pay gap; and

- The re-emergence of stagflation

Dr. Nicholls' concluded with several policy recommendations.

On the topic "**Industrial and Sociopolitical Relations: The Importance of Social Dialogue**", the Honourable Mr. Justice Jefferson Cumberbatch, Justice of Appeal of the Supreme Court of the Barbados Judiciary, addressed the significance of collective bargaining through social dialogue. He pointed out that "*the right to collective bargaining is a fundamental right endorsed by members of the ILO [International Labour Organization] on joining the organization which they have an obligation to respect, to promote and to realize in good faith*".

Mr. Shingo Miyake, Labour Law and International Labour Standards Specialist from the International Labour Organization, explored remote work in his discussion on "**Telework after COVID-19**". He defined Telework as "work performed away from other employees and offices, using various ICT for virtual presence". In his discussion, he highlighted the benefits and challenges for employers and workers and the impact on legislation, contracts and collective agreements and on labour administration, workers' organisations and employers' organisations. Mr. Miyake indicated that there are some key labour law issues that arise with telework namely informing workers of the rules and contractual arrangements, hours of work and the safety and health of employees.

In the final presentation of the day's proceedings, Dr Leighton Jackson, who served as the Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, looked at the issue of "**Security Guards and Labour Relations in the Caribbean**" and the lack of protection for security guards. In his contribution, he analysed the recent Jamaican decision of National Housing Trust and Marksman Ltd. & Robert Epstein in which the Court ruled that the security guards are employees and not independent contractors.

The Meet with the Court Symposium was attended by judges, attorneys at law, industrial relations and human resource practitioners, representatives of government agencies, workers' and employers' organisations along with the Honourable The Chief Justice of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Mr. Justice Ivor Archie; Senator the Honourable Reginald Amour, S.C., Attorney General; His Lordship, The Honourable Justice Benedict B.Kanyip, President of the National Industrial Court of Nigeria; Mr. Dennis Zulu, Director of the International Labour Organisation Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean and Senator the Honourable Andre Lewis, Labour Representative in the Parliament of Grenada, President of the Grenada Trades Union Council, President of the Caribbean Congress of Labour and President General of the Grenada Technical and Allied Workers Union.

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