The Judiciary extends its deepest appreciation to those members of staff at the San Fernando Magistrates’ Court who have remained steadfast in their commitment to the institution and its customers in continuing operations during the last two weeks.

The Judiciary remains concerned that members of the public continue to experience unnecessary hardship when attempting to access services at the Court. The Judiciary has made attempts to hold discussions with representatives of the union, who have been invited to communicate its specific concerns to the Judiciary, but who to date have failed to inform what has led to the continued abandonment of workstations by some members of staff.

Despite their reliance on Section 15 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, Chap. 88:08, no conditions have been cited that fall within the ambit of that Section. The failure to follow the provisions of section 16(1) of said Act which states that “upon refusing to work or to do a particular work the employee shall immediately report the circumstances of the refusal or intended refusal to the employer or his representative and a representative of the safety and health committee” is also of concern. Today all members of staff who have been away from their assigned stations were instructed to return to work to ensure the delivery of regular services to our customers.

We have, in the spirit of goodwill, kept the representative union updated on information which they have requested and note that reports provided to date have failed to disclose any justification for the action taken. The Judiciary continues to be available to meet and discuss any legitimate concerns with respect to the San Fernando Magistrates’ Court or with any other Court facility.

The Judiciary remains committed to ensuring its employees operate in a safe environment in compliance with the existing regulations. Internally, annual assessments are conducted at each court location to identify and address occupation health and safety issues and the organization has an established framework and protocol for rectifying these concerns. Before the current action was taken, the Judiciary had already commenced a programme of work for upgrade and repairs at various court buildings. The works are all to be completed within three to nine months from commencement, with varying completion times depending on the works to be completed at each facility.

In addition to the physical infrastructure works the Judiciary has also been upgrading and modernizing a number of court service delivery mechanisms and vigorously pursuing the construction and addition of new work spaces for its staff. These activities have all been undertaken to ensure a professional
operating environment for our internal and external customers based on the highest standard of customer care.

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