

# GEORGE-BRIDGE DECLARATION OF THE 2ND REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON CRIME AND VIOLENCE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

HOSTED BY BARBADOS IN GEORGETOWN, GUYANA

22 NOVEMBER 2024

The Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) meeting in Georgetown, Guyana with regional experts, members of regional correctional and law enforcement agencies, and with CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), the Regional Security System (RSS), and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), in a collaborative atmosphere that was focused on a regional approach on crime and security defined by speed, scale and endurance with a strengthened RSS, a suite of model legislation, and the determination to deal with cultural crassness, and to support the growth of empathy and address the critical importance of mental health and education,

**acknowledged** the working definition of Crime and Violence as a Public Health Issue as proposed by CARPHA,

“The public health approach to violence and crime is a systemic multidisciplinary evidence-based framework that seeks to understand, prevent, and mitigate violence and crime by addressing their societal, behavioural and environmental determinants. This approach applies public health principles – such as surveillance, risk, and protective factor identification, intervention, monitoring, and evaluation – to reduce the incidence impact, and recurrence of violence and crime.

This approach involves multisectors, including law enforcement, health, education, academia, social services, and community stakeholders working collaboratively to design and implement interventions to reduce harm, enhance public safety and build cohesive communities.”

**acknowledged also** the guiding policy principles of the Needham Point Declaration (NPD),

“1. That crime be viewed as a public health emergency, following the lead of the Heads of Government meeting in Port-of-Spain in April 2023.

2. That as a matter of urgency, each Member State of the Caribbean Community develops, adopts, and implements a holistic and inclusive Criminal Justice Reform Strategy.

3. That there be urgent provision of adequate human, financial, and other resources to criminal justice institutions and agencies including particularly, the police and prosecution services, the judiciary, and the prison services.”

The Second Regional Symposium on Crime and Violence as a Public Health Issue resolved to:

**Endorse** the Needham's Point Declaration.

**Mandate** the CARICOM Secretariat to develop a Contribution Formula for a US\$2.5 million fund to support initiatives addressing crime and violence as a public health issue.

**WE THE HEADS WILL INTENSIFY EFFORTS, INCLUDING**

**Establish** a Task Force to draft model legislation, including those identified in the Needham's Point Declaration within four (4) months, with drafting support seconded from Member States and approval by the Legal Affairs Committee (LAC);

**Identify** a dedicated focal point to monitor progress, liaise with stakeholders, and ensure timely implementation;

**Direct** the CARICOM IMPACS to advise on any further changes in the regional architecture, necessary for more effective collaboration on law enforcement and operational matters;

**Conduct** an immediate review of systems, manpower, and terms and conditions across law enforcement agencies, beginning with police services and extending to customs and immigration;

**Recognise** the double jeopardy of high levels of violence and unsatisfactory regard by protective or law enforcement agencies endured by female citizens of the Caribbean Community, and as such, require targeted inclusion in the regional approach on crime and violence as a public health issue.

**Implement** targeted programs for children affected by violence, including those of murder victims and incarcerated perpetrators;

**Develop** the necessary measures to reverse the decline in civility and conflict resolution, including by engaging regional artistes to assist in reversing that decline.

**Promote** mental health interventions and support systems to assist with reducing the link between mental health and crime and violence;

**Facilitate** economic reintegration of convicts through entrepreneurial, agricultural, and trade opportunities;

**Invest** in initiatives aimed at at-risk youth;

**Collaborate** with Ministries of Education to foster positive disciplinary behaviour for those at risk of, or who have come into conflict with delinquency.

**Convene** a dialogue between Heads of Government and Judiciary leaders to address crime, violence, and law enforcement challenges in the Region;

**Strengthen** the Regional Security System, urging Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname to join the efforts, noting Guyana's recent accession.

**Acknowledge** St. Kitts and Nevis as the host of the Third Symposium on Crime and Violence as a Public Health Issue in 2025.

**Issued by the Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in Georgetown, Guyana on Friday, 22 November 2024 at the Regional Symposium on Crime and Violence.**