



Media Release

WORKING GROUP ON TOBACCO RECOMMENDS ENFORCEMENT OF PENALTIES AND TRAINING PROGRAMS TO DETER ILLICIT TRADE IN TOBACCO

May 13, 2022:- The Anti-Illicit Trade Task Force's (AITTF) Working Group on Tobacco is recommending that greater emphasis be placed on administering penalties and publicising it in the media once seizures are made in an effort to mitigate illicit trade in tobacco.

The sentiment was expressed during the Group's second meeting, held virtually on April 28. The effective implementation can serve to deter future perpetrators from engaging in illicit trade, though the Group notes ongoing investigations can make this difficult to introduce. The Group however indicated that continuous training and education for law enforcement agencies will provide compulsory, technical knowledge on how to identify illegitimate products on the market and conduct investigations within the parameters of the Tobacco Control Act.

The Working Group also highlighted the efforts of the Tobacco Control Unit, which has been working assiduously on identifying and reducing illicit trade in tobacco. With the enforcement of new labelling requirements on packets, which will take effect in September 2022, and the publication of legal licence holders and all illegal cigarette brands, the Working Group believes detection will be made easier for law enforcement officers.

Continuing from its previous meeting, the group also delved deeper into other recommendations to tackle illicit trade in tobacco products such as legislative review, intensifying border control and security, institutional collaboration and the need for proper enforcement of penalties when the Special Economic Zones regime is established.

Representation at the meeting was made by the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association, Crime Stoppers Trinidad and Tobago Limited, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Customs and Excise Division, the Financial Intelligence Unit of Trinidad and Tobago, and the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Ongoing discussions on activities and initiatives to be undertaken will take place in a couple weeks, as the Working Group will meet again on May 26, 2022. To learn more about the AITTF, members of the public are encouraged to visit the Task Force's web page at <https://tradeind.gov.tt/aittf/>.

END

