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URP Video Statement Transcript - Manuel Romero

Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

My name is Manuel Romero, former Superior Labour Judge, of the High Court of Venezuela. I now live in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (TTO) having been recognised as a Convention Refugee by the UNHCR, Trinidad in 2017.

To the best of my knowledge while Trinidad and Tobago signed on to the Convention it has not ratified it. Being a dualist country Trinidad and Tobago is obligated to incorporate the 1951 Convention into its domestic laws as an Act of Parliament. To date this has not yet been done. As a result there is no Refugee legislation nor amendments made to the Immigration Act making special accommodations and protection for non-nationals seeking asylum. I am aware that one reason is because of the cost and expense of implementing such a Bill but I do believe that refugees have a lot to offer, and can aid with the economic revival of T&T.

Money laundering and terrorism financing continue to be a serious global threat and there have been concerted efforts by the government of Trinidad and Tobago to implement effective measures to prevent and detect Money Laundering and Trafficking. Trafficking in persons has been linked to money laundering and harmonization of these efforts is needed.

We believe there needs to be clear guidelines on how the government should treat with mixed migration into TTO, with emphasis on the protection of rights and the most vulnerable. The following are some recommendations:

1. The Immigration Act be amended and/or Refugee Legislation passed as a Bill and assented to as an Act of Parliament.
2. Coastguard and police should be well resourced and trained in identification of Victims of Trafficking, and persons seeking asylum under the 1951 Convention. These persons should be detected via protection-sensitive entry mechanisms, individually screened and a protocol be observed for referral to specialized units as needed.
3. There should be the establishment of asylum courts or a well developed Refugee Unit to assess claims for asylum and make determinations within a reasonable timeframe to prevent undue delay and hardship of persons awaiting deportation.
4. Technology and cybercrime specialists should be trained and resourced to monitor activity of traffickers who use digital and social media platforms to recruit victims.
5. Financial specialists should invest more in financial crimes detection and harmonized money laundering and counter-trafficking efforts.

Prepared by Living Water Community, Ministry for Migrants and Refugees, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.