

Josiah: Drug trafficking worst form of child labour

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The worst forms of child labour in Antigua & Barbuda has been identified as drug trafficking and 'sugar daddying'.

Labour Commissioner Austin Josiah said these forms of child labour on the Island, with some of them imported from other countries.

He said the Labour Department was working with the Gender Affairs Division, immigration, police and education departments and was currently looking into those identified, with two cases of alleged child slavery, one which is being resolved and the other under investigation.

Josiah indicated that the two cases were imported into the country from another Caribbean country where the practice is considered normal according to an ILO rapid assessment.

He was part of the delegation representing the country together with representatives from Antigua & Barbuda Workers Union Hazel Luke and Employers Federation Joyce Martin at the ILO's Third Caribbean Meeting 'The Worst Forms of Child Labour' in Trinidad last week.

Recent ILO estimates indicate that 211 million children are working around the world in situations prohibited by ILO standards with an astonishing 179 million children aged five to 17 (one in every eight children in the world) still exposed to the worst forms of child labour.

The international community took a significant step to focus global attention on the intolerable exploitation of children by adopting the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention #182

It includes slavery and forced labour (encompasses sale and trafficking of children), use of children in prostitution, production of pornographic performances and illicit activities (production and trafficking of drugs), and hazardous work.

A strong link has been established between the paedophile and sexual abuse in general and the uses of children to pander to these vices for economic gain and effective action to protect children requires national and international effort beyond the scope of Labour legislature.

Among the 12 recommendations participants to the Caribbean meeting agreed to were request meetings with appropriate ministries to discuss and implement follow up action, countries ratify the C.138 and C.182 without delay, legislation be reviewed and harmonised in line with C.132 and C.185, list of hazardous work should be actively disseminated and education, training and awareness raising carried out.

Enforcement needs to be improved and countries should provide for and impose appropriate penalties and sanctions, governments ensure child labour issues, including worst forms are included in the Caricom programme for children in response to UNGASS fro children and to be represented to the COHSOD of Caricom in April next year.