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CSOs Review the Non-Governmental Organisations Act

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On 19th March 2019, representatives from 18 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) spent the day at the Financial Administration Centre Conference Room reviewing the Non-Governmental Organisations Act, Cap 13.33 (NGO Act). The consultation was hosted under the auspices of the Coalition of Civil Society Organisations with support from the Saint Lucia National Trust and funding from the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP) implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This consultation was convened at the request of CSOs present at the initial presentation of the Act by the Coalition at its Strategic Plan Validation Consultation on 21st November 2018.

According to Statutory Instrument, 2017, No. 131, the NGO Act came into force on 14th December 2017. As stated in the NGO Act, its purpose is “to provide for the registration of Non-Governmental Organisations, to promote and protect the recognition of Non-Governmental Organisations, and to provide for the monitoring and regulation of Non-Governmental

Organisations registered under this Act and for related matters”. It is worth noting however, that the Act was initially drafted in 2006 and was amended in 2013 to include *inter alia*, reference to the Money Laundering (Prevention) Act, No.8 of 2010 and the Anti-Terrorism Act, No.36 of 2003.

The consultation provided an opportunity for CSOs to improve their understanding of the provisions of the Act and to also voice their views for consideration by the Ministry of Equity. The day’s proceedings commenced with a review of Part II and Part III of the Act which addressed the protection of freedom of association and the responsibilities of Non-Governmental Organisations respectively. This segment was facilitated by the Chair of the Coalition, Mr. Bishnu Tulsie. The subsequent sections of the Act were presented by Mr. Tommy Descartes, Deputy Director within the Social Transformation Research Unit of the Ministry of Equity, Social Justice, Empowerment and Local Government.

By the end of the consultation, CSOs were more confident about the requirements of the Act and made meaningful contributions regarding its improvement. CSOs also requested a subsequent consultation to discuss regulations to accompany the Act as well as a similar session to review the Money Laundering (Prevention) Act, No.8 of 2010. The recommendations from this consultation will be compiled and submitted to the relevant authorities for consideration. This consultation is just one of the ways in which CSOs can unite and benefit under the umbrella body of the Coalition of Civil Society Organisations. Learn more about the Coalition and how you can become a member at www.saintluciacsocoalition.org.

