

ERC, UN Guyana Host Successful Workshop on Countering Hate Speech with Youths

In recognition of International Youth Day, observed on August 12th, the Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC), in collaboration with United Nations (UN) Guyana hosted a transformative workshop focused on Countering Hate Speech with youths.

The event was held at Cara Loge and brought together young people from a diverse network of youth organisations to engage in meaningful dialogue, education, and capacity-building exercises aimed at combating hate speech and promoting harmonious relations.

The workshop saw the attendance of Shaikh Moeenul Hack, Chairman of ERC, Ms. Gomin Camacho, ERC's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mr. Nicolas Pron, Area Representative of UNICEF Guyana and Suriname, who spoke briefly on the importance of this workshop and youths, and Ms. Tricia Teekah, UN's Human Rights Advisor, among other key partners.

The Chairman of ERC, in his opening remarks at the workshop, acknowledged that while our society is largely harmonious, it is not without its challenges. Shaikh Hack posited further that "as part of this campaign, we will also engage with key stakeholders, such as media representatives, social media influencers, and parliamentarians. These efforts are particularly timely as we approach Elections 2025, a period known for heightened ethnic tensions and, unfortunately, an increase in hate speech."

Ms. Gomin Camacho, ERC's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), during her presentation at the workshop outlined that the youth population in Guyana, which represents the largest demographic in our country, is one of the key partners in executing this Countering Hate Speech campaign.

According to the CEO, "Hate speech is an issue which takes many forms, and its impact causes serious harm to individuals and societies. Research conducted by the UN has found that the medium, most commonly, used to perpetuate hate speech is online platforms. The ERC concurs with this finding as through our Media Monitoring Unit, we have consistently recorded the most violations occurring on the online platforms."

To this end, she explained that the workshop was, inter alia, organised to better equip youths with the necessary information to more easily recognize Hate Speech in all its forms and provide participants with the tools and strategies to understand, and counteract it.

Expert facilitators and technical staff from the ERC and UN Guyana led interactive sessions that explored the forms, impacts, laws, regulations, violations and penalties, among other relevant topic areas, to counter hate speech.

Through group discussions and practical activities, participants were encouraged to reflect on their experiences and contribute to the development of a draft action plan, outlining steps they can take within their communities to counter hate speech and its effects. This plan will be further refined



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and used by the ERC and its partners to aid in its ongoing campaign to bring greater awareness and education on the need to counter Hate Speech.

ERC's collaboration with UN Guyana underscores the shared commitment to addressing Hate Speech as a global issue that requires local action. As such, the Commission in continued partnership with UN Guyana and the Guyana National Broadcasting Authority (GNBA), will soon be conducting another workshop of this nature, with greater focus on working with social media influencers, members of the media and DJs, among other key stakeholders whose platforms can effect positive change.