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Statement from the Ministry of Legal Affairs on protocols for COVID-19

The Ministry of Legal Affairs, in ongoing consultation with the Grenada Bar Association and various other stakeholders, has taken active steps to help prevent the potential spread of the coronavirus in Grenada.

Immediately following the Honourable Prime Minister's announcement to the nation last Friday, it was agreed that the court was an area that required urgent attention to ensure proper balance between the 'social distancing' advisory, and the rights of people to have access to justice, here in Grenada.

The Honourable Chief Justice has encouraged member states to utilize technology as much as possible, particularly using the option of video conferencing, where possible. To this extent, the Civil Courts have allowed litigants and witnesses who would have otherwise travelled to Grenada from outside of the jurisdiction to attend hearings, to be linked into the proceedings via videoconference.

Where this is not a practical option, the matters have been given a short adjournment, to allow the Court Office to make a further determination based on further advisories by the authorities.

The Criminal Courts have agreed to adjourn ongoing criminal trials until further notice, and discharge the jury on those matters. This process started on Monday, March 16, 2020, and is expected to continue on Tuesday March 17, 2020.

Steps are also being taken to eliminate the need for prisoners on remand at Her Majesty's Prisons to physically attend court to deal with bail applications; and instead to do so by video link.

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Already, today, there has been a general sanitization of all the high courts; and this will continue, to include Magistrates' courts, in keeping with recommended health protocols for public spaces.

An urgent meeting will be held tomorrow Tuesday March 17, 2020, with stakeholders to make further decisions and establish protocols for the High Courts and Magistrate's Courts. This meeting will include representatives from the Bench, the State, the Court Office and the Grenada Bar Association.

Further notices will be issued to advise all stakeholders, as more information becomes available and decisions are made.