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Commander-in-Chief President Donald Ramotar inspects the Guard of Honour at Eve Leary prior to the opening ceremony of the Police Officers' Annual Conference

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"MAKE no mistake! If you fail to perform your duties and fail to honour the oath you took to protect and serve the Guyanese people, then I will do what I have to do to ensure that the Guyanese people have proper service by the Police Force." This was part of the charge given by Commander-in-Chief of Guyana's Armed Forces President Donald Ramotar to officers present at the Police Officers' Annual Conference 2015.

The conference is being held at the Annex of the Police Officers' Mess, Eve Leary, Georgetown.

During his remarks at the opening ceremony of the conference, which is being held under the theme: 'Providing effective security through partnership, enhanced public trust and capacity

building', President Ramotar stressed the importance of the Guyana Police Force (GPF) upholding the Peelian Principles as it addresses the need to execute its mandate and build public trust.

The Head of State again congratulated the Commissioner of Police, Seelall Persaud, and reminded him of the tremendous responsibilities he has and the need to meet the expectations of our citizens. At this important juncture, he noted that "I have decided to reinforce the important role that the Guyana Police Force (GPF) plays in ensuring the safety and security of citizens."

The President emphasised the importance of a strong and professional GPF for the maintenance of social order, for the protection of people from crime and to act as a visible deterrent to crimes and disorder and "to also lay out the reforms that I believe are necessary to bring [the] GPF in line with the needs of all Guyanese."

"The vision of the GPF is not one that only meets the needs of our citizens, but [also one] that sets the standards that other nations will wish to copy," he said, while explaining what he expects in the future from the GPF. "

President Ramotar, while explaining the Peelian Principles and urging the officers to practice them, said: "Let's first review the basic guidelines for policing under the Peelian Principles, these are the basic guidelines" that came from colonial times to present modern day, for ethical policing. "Every police officer should bear an identification number to ensure accountability for his or her actions.

"I expect you to exercise zero tolerance [for] the corrupt few who have infiltrated your ranks and then take appropriate action; I also expect you, the leadership, to set the example. A Police



President Donald Ramotar apprising officers of his expectations from this year's conference (Photos by Delano Williams)



Officer cannot be a walking contradiction. I am optimistic that the Officers here today can address this situation, but make no mistake if you fail to perform your duties and fail to honour the oath you took to protect and serve the Guyanese people, then I will do what I have to do to ensure that the Guyanese people have proper service by the Police Force.” – President Ramotar

“Whether the police are effective or not is not measured by the number of arrests, but on the lack of crime,” the President stressed, noting that “trust and accountability are paramount.” He explained that the Peelian Principles are more relevant today, as officers express their variety of skills in different aspects of everyday policing.

The Head of State took some time to shed light on the recent survey findings of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) which found that Guyana has the lowest level of trust in their police in the Region, and this distrust has decreased over time. He added that the public may have their views on the survey, but the reality is that LAPOP has published its findings and these have been widely disseminated and therefore must be addressed objectively.

The survey, he noted, found that between 2012 to 2014, the Guyanese public trust in the GPF has decreased by 10 points, from 45.8 points in 2012 to 35.4 points in 2014 and added, “this is a worrying

finding.” President Ramotar then argued, “Police officers that discipline themselves, it is expected that they will discuss the perceived decrease in trust that might have fuelled such views and what could be done.”

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“Let me be clear on this point: this perception is not acceptable to me nor any Guyanese and we must take steps to change these perceptions. Before anything can be done there must be a desire to move forward and he challenged each officer to find that desire.”

The Commander-in-Chief, after explaining the facts of the findings noted that it is unacceptable when members of the Police Force or the joint services are either perpetrators or are perceived to be in league with perpetrators.

“The population and those elected to lead whether in Government or in Opposition will hold you, the leadership, accountable for the indiscretions of those among you, or those whom you lead if they are culpable for indiscretions,” he said.

In concluding his remarks, the Head of State with vibrancy said: “I am aware that while [the] majority of the Force are committed, patriotic men and women, there is a minority of a few rotten oranges that can spoil the whole basket. I expect you to exercise zero tolerance [for] the corrupt few who have infiltrated your ranks and then take appropriate action; I also expect you, the leadership, to set the example. A police officer cannot be a walking contradiction. I am optimistic that the officers here today can address this situation, but make no mistake if you fail to perform your duties and fail to honour the oath you took to protect and serve the Guyanese people, then I will do what I have to do to ensure that the Guyanese people have proper service by the Police Force.”

President Ramotar proposed a “15 in 2015 Programme” that is designed to restore confidence in the nation’s police force and he also explained each of the 15 steps that the programme shall follow. “As you commence your conference, my best wishes for full participation and objective debates and fruitful discussions in order to achieve the objectives you have set and to arrive at a successful conference outcome,” the President said as he bid the Officers best wishes during their deliberations.

(By Rebecca Ganesh-Ally)