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**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Photo Caption: Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security, the Hon. Zavia Mayne engages in a conversation with one of the inmates at the St. Catherine Adult Correctional Centre. Over 20 inmates successfully completed the fourteen-week Step Out and Strive Programme on Thursday, September 29, 2022.

Do not return, warns Security State Minister

“Ensure that when you leave [prison], it is never to return,” is the charge given to inmates by the Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security, the Hon. Zavia Mayne.

“Take the easier way out, turn from your gun-slinging ways because once you go through the judicial process, life imprisonment is not going to be easy,” Minister Mayne warned while delivering the main address at the Step Out and Strive (SOAS) Graduation Ceremony held at the St. Catherine Adult Correctional Centre yesterday (September 29).

The State Minister noted that the Government continues to implement legislative frameworks with stiffer penalties such as the Firearms (Prohibition, Restriction and Regulations) Act 2022, to dissuade young men and women from a life of crime.

“Persons who are convicted of an illegal firearm-related offence will be sentenced to life imprisonment with a mandatory minimum of 15 years before you are eligible for parole,” he said.

Minister Mayne was overjoyed that the inmates made the right choice to participate in the Department of Correctional Services’ Step Out and Strive Programme, which seeks to encourage positive cognitive behavioural change.

“If through such a programme, incarcerated individuals can develop the mental tools necessary for self-management and self-control, then they will be empowered to chart their path in life going forward, and resist falling back on their former path,” he added.

The Minister pointed out that though DCS provides the inmates with basic amenities, its duty of care extends beyond providing basic human needs.

“The Department has a duty of care to ensure that those who come within these walls go through a process of rehabilitation which prepares them to reintegrate into the wider society,” he explained.

In closing, Minister Mayne encouraged the inmates to spread the message about the benefits of the SOAS Programme to other inmates, **“let them know that you have wisened and that you are now prepared to Step Out and Strive as a fully vibrant member of society who has been transformed, rehabilitated and ready to be**

reintegrated into the wider society.”

Over 20 inmates from the St. Catherine Adult Correctional Centre completed the fourteen-week Step Out and Strive Programme. The Programme began in 2017 and is operational across the seven adult correctional centres.