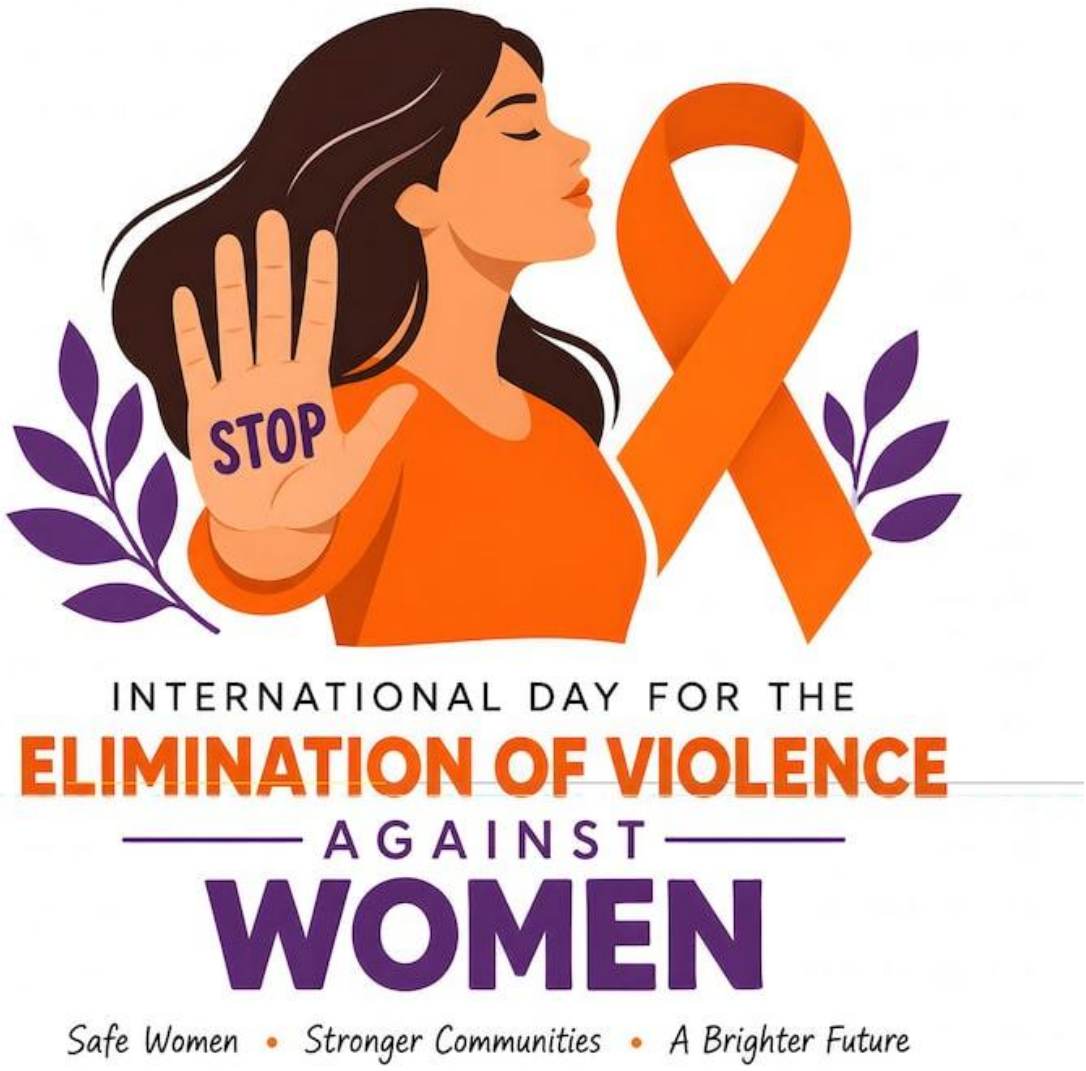
STATEMENT BY THE WOMEN'S COMMITTEE OF THE GUYANA PUBLIC SERVICE UNION (GPSU)

STATEMENT: <u>In Observance of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.</u>



November 25, 2026.

In observance of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25, 2026, the Women's Committee of the Guyana Public Service Union (GPSU) stands in unwavering solidarity with all victims and survivors of domestic and gender-based violence across Guyana and around the world. Under this year's United Nations theme—"UNiTE to End Violence Against Women and Girls: Ensure Justice, Protect Survivors, End Impunity"—we reaffirm that violence against women is a heinous violation of human rights, and

we assert that women must be treated fairly and equally in every respect as their male counterparts. Violence and discrimination rob individuals and families of their dignity and strip them of their fundamental right to live and work free from fear, threats, and abuse.

In Guyana, violence and harassment against women continue to erode the quality of life that our families deserve—a life anchored in mutual respect, safety, and honour. Compounding this crisis are severe economic pressures that disproportionately burden women. The escalating cost of living and the daily struggle to adequately provide for dependents force many women to work longer hours or take on multiple roles just to make ends meet. This relentless financial and emotional strain severely encroaches upon precious family time, depriving mothers and caregivers of the opportunity to nurture, bond with their children, and pass down the foundational values, moral guidance, and cultural ethics that hold our society together. Beyond weakening the social fabric of the home, these mounting pressures create heightened household tensions that too often spill over into domestic abuse. While economic hardship is never an excuse for violence, alleviating the socio-economic burdens on working women through fair living wages, reasonable working hours, and genuine work-life balance is essential to preserving healthy family life and building safer communities.

Furthermore, domestic violence does not stop at the front door; its trauma, economic fallout, and safety risks follow workers directly into the workplace. Recognizing that violence and harassment in the world of work is a global crisis, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted Convention No. 190 (the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019) alongside Recommendation No. 206 on June 21, 2019. These landmark instruments guarantee the right of every worker to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence, while obligating member states that ratifies these instruments to enact protective legislation, workplace policies, and support mechanisms—such as paid leave and flexible work arrangements—to protect survivors.

Since the adoption of ILO Convention No. 190 in 2019, the Guyana Public Service Union has repeatedly written to successive governments urging immediate ratification. Regrettably, there has been no meaningful progress on this critical international commitment to date.

While the Women's Committee acknowledges recent legislative steps taken at the national level, including the enactment of the **Family Violence Act 2024**, this legislation alone is not sufficient without strong enforcement, accessible survivor support services, and comprehensive workplace protections. Ratifying ILO Convention 190 would bridge the gap between domestic protections and labour rights, ensuring that public service workers and all employees across Guyana are protected both at home and on the job.

As the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence begins, the GPSU Women's Committee calls upon:

· **The Government of Guyana** to prioritize and immediately ratify ILO Convention No. 190 and implement Recommendation No. 206 across all sectors, while committing to good-faith negotiations for fair living wages that reflect the true cost of living and protect working families from economic distress.

· **Public and Private Sector Employers** to establish clear, zero-tolerance workplace policies against gender-based violence, offer flexible working hours and reduced-hour options that promote healthy work-life balance and family bonding, and provide confidential support, safety planning, and paid leave provisions for affected employees.

· **Law Enforcement and the Judiciary** to ensure swift, survivor-centered enforcement of the Family Violence Act so that perpetrators face accountability and impunity is ended.

· **All Citizens and Union Members** to break the silence, challenge harmful norms, and support survivors in their families, workplaces, and communities.

Violence against women is preventable; it is no inevitable. The GPSU Women's Committee remains steadfast in its advocacy for living wages, safe workplaces, and a Guyana where every woman and girl can live in peace, security, and dignity.