**ADDRESS BY HON. MOSES JN BAPTISTE**

**MINISTER FOR HEALTH, WELLNESS AND ELDERLY AFFAIRS**

**World Breastfeeding Week**

**August 1st to 7th, 2023**

**August 1st `11**

This week St. Lucia joins the rest of the world in celebration of World Breastfeeding Week.  It is observed annually from August 1st to 7th and is a global campaign to raise awareness about the importance of breastfeeding.   The aim is to positively influence policy-makers, employees, and families, and to encourage mothers to breast-feed their infants. The theme for this year is “**Enabling Breastfeeding: Making a Difference for Working Parents**.”

Breastfeeding is part of good nutrition for infants from birth to 2 years and beyond. Exclusive breastfeeding is encouraged from birth to 6 months, as breast milk provides all the nutrition a baby needs at this stage. After 6 months, mothers are encouraged to continue breastfeeding whilst gradually introducing solid foods to babies.

Support to breastfeeding mothers from partners, family, friends, and care-givers is essential to achieve successful breastfeeding.   Employers, you can support breastfeeding by providing mothers time and a place to breastfeed their babies and store the breast milk. Flexible schedules to accommodate breastfeeding, which will reduce separation of women from their babies after maternity leave can also be considered. .

As a country with a high prevalence of NCDs, breastfeeding can be a simple act of prevention. There is evidence that breastfeeding reduces the risk of some cancers; type 2 diabetes, obesity, hypertension and cardiovascular diseases.

I therefore encourage women to breastfeed as long as they can.   Remember that breast milk is the gold standard for nutrition, healthy growth, development and protection.  Let’s make breastfeeding easier by making a difference for all working parents.

I thank you.