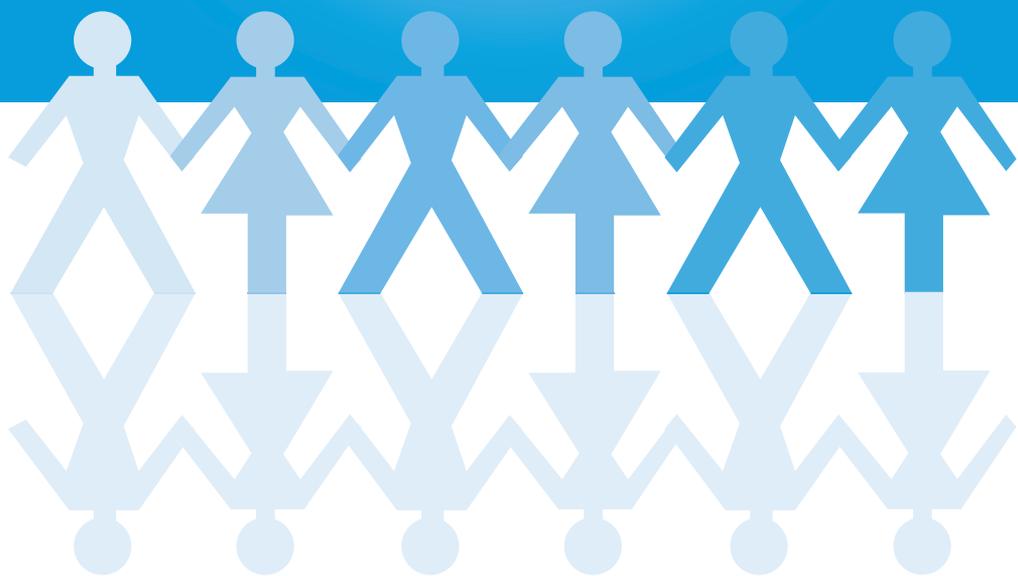


Caribbean Joint Statement on Gender Equality and the Post 2015 and SIDS Agenda



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Preamble

As the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) framework comes to a close in 2015, the Caribbean Region is advocating for a comprehensive and transformative Post 2015 and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) development agenda. The goal of advocacy efforts will be to ensure that Caribbean specific priorities for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment are advanced. The emerging global development frameworks must address the structural foundations of gender-based inequality, including the recognition that inequalities are a consequence of the unequal relations of power. We are therefore asking that the global Post 2015 and SIDS frameworks take into consideration the social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities of SIDS, and the resulting challenges for sustainable, human rights-based and gender responsive development.

1 With the support of the UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean, the Joint Statement was generated by high level government officials and civil society representatives from CARICOM countries, with inputs from regional inter-governmental bodies and international partners in the Caribbean. The Statement represents Caribbean voices and expectations in the emerging Post 2015 and SIDS global agendas as it relates to gender equality. The Joint Statement emerged from a UN Women-supported "Caribbean Forum on Gender Equality and the Post 2015 Agenda" held in Barbados (22nd to 23rd August 2013). In adopting the Joint Statement, participants committed to an advocacy strategy so as to ensure that the "asks", priorities and perspective contained in the Joint Statement are considered by decision-makers within the emerging global processes around Post 2015 and SIDS. Forum Participants endorsed the need for a stand-alone goal on Gender Equality in the Post 2015 Agenda, as well as mainstreaming of gender equality priorities throughout Post 2015 and SIDS.

Freedom from Violence

Acknowledging that violence has become culturally embedded in all spheres of our societies, we ask that the emerging Post 2015 and SIDS global frameworks:

- Presume that freedom from violence is an inalienable human right, requiring full state action; and ensures that there is accountability and support of non-state actors to expand advocacy, prevention and responses to violence;
- Acknowledge that violence against women and girls is endemic and gender based; and that violence against women and girls because they are women and girls is unacceptable;
- Acknowledge response to violence as a shared responsibility among the state, individuals, families and communities;
- Address root causes of violence, including how women and men, boys and girls are differently affected by violence;
- Ensure that all measures are in place to protect vulnerable groups from all forms of violence, especially sexual violence, intimate partner violence and other forms of gender based violence (GBV). Vulnerable groups should include, women, children, persons with disabilities, rural and indigenous women, youth, the elderly, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgendered and inter-sex (LGBTI) persons, people living with HIV and sex workers;
- Recognise and promote the critical role of prevention as a systemic response to eliminating violence at all levels of society; and,
- Address the vulnerability of small island states to transnational crime, including the drug trade and trade in small arms, by strengthening international and national treaties.

Access to Justice

Recognising that the justice system is important for the promotion of human rights, and furthermore, recognizing that justice is often delayed and denied we ask that the new global frameworks:

- Result in the reform of legal systems and amendment of laws which cause exclusion and harm, especially to vulnerable groups;
- Ensure the removal of all systemic barriers to the effective delivery of justice, especially delay, widespread withdrawal of charges and the inappropriate use of cash settlements.

Accessing Capabilities

Education

Recognising that education as is currently structured and practiced through institutional and community systems reproduces racial, ethnic, social, economic and gender inequalities; and acknowledging that public education systems function in a constrained economic environment, and a social milieu that includes absent parents, crime, violence and poverty; we call for the emerging global frameworks to support the building of capacities in individuals that would allow them to live meaningful lives and be productive citizens. To this end, it is therefore, essential that the emerging Post 2015 and SIDS global frameworks support actions that:

- Develop critical thinking skills, from early childhood, about ways in which traditional cultural norms reinforce inequality and limit capabilities and access to resources;
- Utilise transformative approaches and methodologies that facilitate the development of self-esteem and confidence, autonomy, agency, leadership skills and the ability to participate fully in the life of a family, community and nation;
- Eliminate barriers that constrain freedom of choice in selection of areas of study and career paths, and equip individuals with skills and competencies to be economically independent;
- Facilitate the development and implementation of public education programmes that promote gender equality, respect for human rights and a culture of peace;
- Provide comprehensive sexuality education that is age appropriate, gender responsive and life-skills based;
- Ensure that sociopolitical and economic factors that negatively impact boys' participation in formal education systems are addressed, and that formal certification carries equal social and economic value for both sexes.

Accessing Capabilities

Health

Recognising that health is a fundamental pillar of sustainable development for building resilience in individuals, families and communities; and that a gender-responsive approach that supports holistic health is essential for the realization of all national health goals, we ask that the emerging Post 2015 and SIDS global frameworks ensure the:

- Provision of increased access to mental health services;
- Provision of the widest range of affordable integrated sexual and reproductive health and HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services;
- Prioritisation of the prevention of chronic non-communicable disease;
- Recognition of gender-based violence (GBV) as a public health issue;
- Development of comprehensive health literacy programmes to support holistic, community led initiatives for healthy lifestyles;
- Reduction of maternal mortality and morbidity, including postpartum mental health issues;
- Full Implementation of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, August 2013, including the provision of safe, good-quality abortion services for women with unwanted and unacceptable pregnancies in those cases where abortion is legal or decriminalized under the relevant national legislation; urge States to consider amending their laws, regulations, strategies and public policies relating to the voluntary termination of pregnancy in order to protect the lives and health of women and adolescent girls, to improve their quality of life and to reduce the number of abortions;

ensure that all women have effective access to comprehensive health care during the reproductive process and specifically to skilled, institutional, compassionate obstetric care and to the best possible maternal health services during pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium, as well as to services that include the termination of pregnancy in those cases where the law provides for such services, and guarantee universal access to assisted fertility treatments;

- Provision of equitable access to reliable potable water and improved sanitation.

Food and Nutrition

Observing that Caribbean societies are increasingly food import dependent, that climate change is affecting food production, and that access to affordable nutrient rich food is in decline; and furthermore acknowledging the rise of chronic non-communicable disease including diabetes, hypertension, cancers and obesity, we call for the emerging global Post 2015 and SIDS global frameworks to:

- Prioritise domestic and regional agriculture and trade;
- Address inequitable access to land, water, technology and markets that inhibits women's and youth's involvement in agriculture;
- Encourage and facilitate dialogue and measures between government and the private sector for food production, and widespread distribution of locally produced agricultural and agro-processed goods;
- Provide for gender sensitive public education and action on food and nutrition, to transform consumption practices.

Economic Empowerment

Considering that there continues to be significant differences in women's and men's access to economic opportunities and in the power they exert over existing economic structures in society; and, recognizing that measures that enhance and secure the financial independence of women; promote their equal participation; and, provide socio-economic protections that would contribute to reduction in poverty and inequality, thereby enhancing the quality of life of women and their families, we ask that the emerging Post 2015 and SIDS global frameworks ensure :

- Support for gender-responsive trade policies which have at their core sustainable developmental principles and take into account the human rights and developmental challenges of women living in small island developing states (SIDS) and middle income countries (MICs);
- Support for poverty reduction through macro-economic reforms which reduce the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women and other vulnerable groups, including adolescent mothers, female heads of households, persons with disabilities, the elderly, indigenous peoples, domestic workers and rural women in particular;
- Reduction in exposure to and participation of women and youth in the sex and drug trades;
- Promotion of labour reforms in the formal sector, prioritising living wages and state health and pension plans;
- Support for gender responsive economic policies and practices, including support for the integration of women in non-traditional sectors, including through training in environmentally sustainable technologies;
- Creation of and access to financing and investment opportunities to develop women's and girls' entrepreneurship;

- Enforcement of the decent work agenda and a living wage for all categories of workers;
- Improvement of women's resilience to economic challenges, natural hazards and climate change;
- Preservation and valuation of traditional knowledge and technologies, ownership of lands and cultural assets and the protection of intellectual property rights of indigenous peoples and rural women;
- Access to a non-restrictive aid framework;
- Strengthened partnerships, ensuring that no one is left behind as a result of enforced fiscal policies.

Leadership

Recognising women's inalienable rights to participation and voice at all levels of decision making; given that the Caribbean has one of the lowest rates of women in politics in the world, despite women constituting a significant component of political processes; recognising the persistence of the cultural, social, economic and politically entrenched barriers to women's leadership, we call on the emerging Post 2015 and SIDS global framework to;

- Address the full national implementation of international commitments to achieve gender equality informed by the UN, and international and regional Conventions, treaties and agreements ratified by member states;
- Encourage and enable a critical mass of gender sensitive transformational leaders in all aspects of decision making, including at the level of the household, community, local government, trade unions, national government and international governance institutions;
- Strengthen women's collective action and networks and organisations, which support the advancement of women's leadership and involvement in all spheres of life;
- Correct inequalities resulting in women's under representation on national State Boards and appoint more women to serve as Heads of diplomatic Missions in the UN, regional and international organisations;
- Encourage and enable youth participation and leadership at all levels, through school governance programs and the introduction of a civics curricula in schools;
- Mobilise political parties to transform to gender-friendly practices, including: education, training and support, incentive-based accountability systems, gender parity practices which ensure equal

representation of men and women within their structures; and ensure the appointment of Caribbean people by UN international and regional organisations, to perform the functions of elections monitors in the Caribbean region;

- Implement the CEDAW call for temporary special measures to ensure gender equality in leadership and decision-making; and,
- Enable the emergence of a critical mass of women, to become corporate leaders, serving on private sector boards and involved in all formal and informal areas of economic enterprise.

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