

**Statement**  
**on behalf of the Caribbean Community**  
**(CARICOM)**



**by**  
**The Honourable Frankie Campbell**  
**Minister of Social Services and Urban Development of The Bahamas**  
**at the**  
**Sixty-third Session**  
**of the Commission on the Status of Women**

**New York**

**March 11, 2019**

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Madame Chair

1. It is my distinct honour to deliver the following remarks on behalf of the fourteen Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).
2. I take this opportunity to express congratulations to you as Chair and the Bureau and to express our appreciation to the Secretary General for the comprehensive reports provided for discussions and interactions during this session.
3. CARICOM aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished Minister of the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
4. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls continues to be an important priority for CARICOM Member States. Collectively, we pursue initiatives that are geared toward the enhancement of the status of women and girls in our region, guided by key international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, among others.
5. CARICOM welcomes this year's theme, which underscores the importance of addressing social protection systems, in conjunction with access to public services and sustainable infrastructure, in order to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and mitigate economic, social and environmental challenges. The areas under focus are important and timely for us as Small Island Developing States, particularly, as we prepare to address these issues in several high-level meetings at the first High Level meeting on Universal Health Coverage, the mid-term review of the SAMOA Pathway and the High-level Political Forum Summit.
6. CARICOM Member States persistently dedicate efforts toward building economic, social and environmental growth and development of our region and for the well-

being of our people, including our women and girls, as we remain vulnerable to the effects of climate change and external economic shocks, among other challenges. Therefore, we deem building resilience as necessary not only to ensure an acceptable quality of life for all, but also to ensure that States are equipped to respond to existential threats that challenge our efforts to sustainable development.

7. Unemployment and underemployment are also among the other challenges encountered in our region; and women and youth are most impacted. In this regard, we share the view that public services and sustainable infrastructure create avenues for job creation. CARICOM will continue its efforts to align education with the necessary technical and social skills that correspond to today's labour market.
8. CARICOM remains concerned by the adverse effects of gender-based violence as well as the negative impacts it poses to achieve the empowerment of women and girls. Such a harrowing situation must be urgently addressed. CARICOM has been engaging on measures to reduce and prevent violence against women in the Caribbean, inclusive of data collection, in order to better understand and address the underlying causes of these issues.
9. Enhancing existing social protection systems will assist us in reducing poverty, promoting income security, inequalities and vulnerabilities, and building human capacity. We believe that providing women with equal access to quality education, healthcare, decent work and representation in political and economic decision-making processes as well as protecting their rights in this regard, will fuel growth and development and ensure that no one is left behind.
10. It should be noted that social protection is a shared responsibility and is a core function for development, which is entrenched in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. CARICOM remains fully committed to working with the rest of the international community, to build resilience for mutual growth and development.

11. In recent years, CARICOM has engaged on the establishment of a regional tripartite social dialogue mechanism and Regional Social Protection Floor. This tripartite mechanism involves a partnership among the government, private sector, labour and civil society. We view this mechanism as an important step in affording better standards of living for our people through greater access to health and education services.

Madame Chair

12. Recognizing the importance of literacy and education towards the advancement and economic empowerment of women and girls, the provision of education remains a strong focus in all the CARICOM countries. Education is a powerful driver to effect change and a key input in human development. Through education, women and girls are better equipped to confront the socio-economic challenges.

13. It is for this reason that we welcome the attention given to address access to public services as a mechanism to empower women and girls. Over the years, we have witnessed progress in women's and girl's access to public services, including in education and health. In many countries, including those of our region, women and girls often have higher rates of attendance at educational institutions at different levels compared to men and boys.

Madame Chair

14. The health of our women remains a great concern. CARICOM has seen an increasing ageing population and high prevalence rates of non-communicable diseases among other health challenges, which can increase social protection needs and burden on public service systems. As a result, it is imperative that our health sectors be equipped to correspond to these realities, including in the context of food and nutrition security. In the context of our current theme, the CARICOM Council on Human and Social Development has prioritized the region's pursuit of healthcare

coverage and therefore looks forward to the upcoming High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage.

15. Our Member States' capacity to provide adequate social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure can be further supported by enhanced international cooperation and partnerships and overseas development assistance to promote and ensure gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in our region.

Madame Chair

16. It is our hope that the outcomes of our engagement during this sixty-third session will contribute substantially towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. We will spare no effort to promote the empowerment of women and girls as beacons of courage, hope and change.

I thank you.