



**Commission on the Status of Women
Fifth-fifth Session**

**Statement
by
The Honourable Loretta Butler-Turner, M.P.,
Minister of State for Social Development
of
the Commonwealth of the Bahamas
on behalf of
the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)**

**22 February, 2011
New York**

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to present this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) at this fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. I congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your leadership and express our appreciation for CARICOM's full support and cooperation. CARICOM aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

We meet here today on the cusp of the official launch of UN Women. CARICOM extends its congratulations to Ms. Michelle Bachelet, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women and to the members of her team. We welcome its establishment and express our hope that the goals and objectives we have envisioned in our calls over the years for a new gender architecture will evolve and generate concrete results and changes for women throughout the world, in particular in the Caribbean region. CARICOM welcomes the 'Vision and 100-day action plan' announced by the Executive Director during the first regular session of the Executive Board of UN Women last month and looks forward to its development with the support of Member States and all stakeholders.

Although successes have been achieved, CARICOM recognizes that more needs to be done to realize the goals and aspirations for women of the region and we look forward to working closely with UN Women in this regard. CARICOM is particularly mindful of the inadequate funding, human resources and infrastructure challenges and could undermine the provision of assistance to national partners in the implementation of practical programmes and the strengthening of normative and policy frameworks on gender equality. We therefore encourage Member States to make voluntary contributions to the trust fund of UN Women to allow the entity to better respond to the needs of women and to meet the expectations of Member States.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM accords the highest priority in terms of attention and the time and effort of women and reaffirms its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. We are working assiduously towards the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals and objectives relative to gender equality and the empowerment of women, particularly in the areas of poverty alleviation, the elimination of gender-based violence, mainstreaming a gender perspective in policy development and programmes, increasing the participation of women in leadership positions and decision-making, and enhancing education and training opportunities for women and girls.

the impact of digital relevance given the priority theme of this year's session - "Access and participation of women and girls in education, employment, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's education to high employment and decent work"

Mr. Chairman,

Technology has become a bulwark of activity in the globalized world we now live in. The development can not be sufficiently underscored. In his report contained in document E/CN.5/2011/3, the Secretary-General notes that the advancement of science, technology, innovation, and innovation in accelerating achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in facilitating eradication of poverty, achieving food security, combating diseases, and improving education, all of which constitute to sustained economic growth and development.

In many societies technological advancement has brought about significant change, albeit not at the same pace. To some extent, investment in information and communication technology (ICT) has surpassed investment in other sectors. Governments in both developed and developing, are looking to harness and build in order to compete in the global economy. Yet, many developing countries are lagging behind in a socio-economic development standpoint while the technological world is moving ahead at a rapid pace.

In recognizing the importance of new innovative technologies and its contribution to development, the first Caribbean Conference on Science and Technology was held in Trinidad in 2009. Many of its findings and recommendations are still as relevant as today as they were 7 years ago, perhaps even more so such as inter alia, the need for governments to advance the vigorous and consistent educational provision of school curricula from primary level to ensure that students acquire problem-solving and research development skills; and promotion of science and technology by involving scientists in teaching and learning processes. ICT projects are being pursued in schools in the region to promote access to quality education for young people.

Mr. Chairman,

UNESCO's COMENIUS Centre for International Science and Technology (CICST) has been playing a key role in this area. In collaboration with the National Institute for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, CICST has undertaken a project to research, document and promote public awareness of the works and accomplishments of outstanding women in the field of science and technology. This project was not only meant to honor the few outstanding women who have succeeded in science and technology but was also aimed at inspiring young women and girls to pursue careers in science

and technology, and generally to strive for excellence in their chosen field of endeavour. The Council's publication - "Caribbean Women in Science and Technology" - celebrates the achievement of outstanding Caribbean scientists, technologists and engineers, in areas such as innovation, medicine, science and science education. A reader friendly and graphic filled kids version has also been produced to appeal to young readers and is distributed free of charge to schools throughout the region to inspire young people to pursue careers in science and technology.

Given the international data that low performance in mathematics is one of the factors inhibiting greater national programmes in science and technology, CSF has also undertaken a project called 'Math Made Easy,' through distribution of innovative resource materials to encourage teaching of mathematics at the primary level.

Mr. Chairman,

While it is commendable to undertake initiatives to create a knowledgeable, skilled and technical work force to allow Caribbean countries to compete globally, it is also important to ensure balance, equity and non-discrimination in the creation of such a work force, and that it caters to the needs of all members of the society - men and women, boys and girls. Traditional roles must be expanded to allow greater access for women to leadership and the merit system. Exclusion of women in careers in the field of science and technology must be eliminated if we are to achieve the goals and aspirations we have set for women.

Mr. Chairman,

More than twenty years ago, in a study on the barriers to women's participation in science and technology, it was revealed that women in the Caribbean attain higher levels of literacy and numeracy than males and that a larger proportion of females were entering chemistry and mathematics than males, and an equal proportion of primary school leavers, the reversal of male dominance in tertiary education and gender disparities in favour of women, as well as the fact that women worldwide account for slightly more than a quarter of all scientific researchers, as reported in the 'World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics' are indeed positive signs.

However, we are still very far away from parity in the area. More needs to be done in CARICOM Member States and elsewhere to change cultural and attitudinal biases and family expectations that perpetuate gender stereotypes, even in our educational system. Innovative approaches are adopted to increase access to and the representation of women and girls in science and technology, gender equality and the empowerment of women will largely remain rhetorical and the attainment of their full potential will not be hastened.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM wishes to once again highlight the continuing dire situation of Haiti, a member of its family, following the impact of the devastating earthquake in that country, life is far from normal, especially for women and girls who face multiple challenges, including increasing poverty, mental and health risks, and persistent exposure to sexual abuse and other forms of violence. Despite these challenges, the people of Haiti remain resilient in the face of such challenges, it is CARICOM's hope that the assistance received from the international community will be sufficient to help them rebuild their lives. CARICOM is again appealing to States to make good on their pledges for assistance bearing in mind that the men, women and girls of Haiti bear the brunt of such suffering and are hard pressed under such circumstances to contribute to the peace and development of their country.

In closing, CARICOM expresses its appreciation for the efforts being undertaken by the United Nations system and relevant stakeholders to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls throughout the world. Let us strengthen our collaboration to make gender equality and the empowerment of women a reality.

I thank you.