



**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**

Please check against delivery

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to present this statement on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) at this fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. I congratulate you and the members of the Bureau on your election and assure you of 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 congratulation 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 change for women throughout the world, in particular on the ground in countries where such change is greatly needed. 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 held 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 our region and we look forward to working closely with UN Women in this regard. CARICOM is particularly mindful that the lack of adequate funding poses a formidable challenge 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 core budget 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 to gender equality and the empowerment of women and reaffirms its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Plan for Action and to 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 latter is of particular relevance given the priority theme of this year's session - *"Access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work."*

Mr. Chairman,

Technology has permeated all fields of activity in the globalized world we now live in. The increasing significance of its role in national economic development can not be sufficiently underscored. In his report contained in document E/CN.6/2011/3, the Secretary-General notes the relevance of science, technology 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 contribute 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. Countries, both developed and developing, are looking to move ahead in order to compete in the global economy. Yet, many developing countries are lagging behind from 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 and Tobago in September, 1998. Many of its findings and recommendations are still as relevant today as they were 12 years ago, perhaps even more so, such as, inter alia, the need for governments to adopt a vigorous role in science education; revision 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 technology, to advance teaching and learning, and to deliver quality education for young people.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM recognizes the need to increase women's and girls' access and participation in the field of science and technology education and training. The Caribbean Council of Science and Technology (CCST) has been playing a key role in this area. In collaboration with the National Institute for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, CCST has undertaken a project to research, document and promote public awareness of the works and accomplishments of outstanding Caribbean women in the field of science and technology. This project was not only geared to correct the view that women have not excelled 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 Icons in Science and Technology" chronicles the life and achievement of outstanding Caribbean scientists, several of whom are women, in areas of 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.

Given the rationale that that low performance in mathematics is one of the factors inhibiting greater national programmes in science and technology, CCST 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 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. Gender stereotyping and the persistent 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 done 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 for physics. More notably, the reversal of male dominance in tertiary enrollment 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 this area. More needs to be done in CARICOM Member States and elsewhere to change cultural and attitudinal biases and family expectations that perpetuate gender stereotype in our educational system. Unless 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 realized.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM wishes to once again highlight the continuing dire situation of Haiti, a member of its family. One year after the devastating earthquake in that country, life is far from normal, especially for women and girls, who face the triple challenges of increasing poverty, environmental and health risks, and persistent exposure to sexual abuse and other forms of violence. Even though the people of Haiti remain resilient in the face of such challenges, it is disheartening to note that only a fraction of the assistance pledged has actually been received. CARICOM is again appealing to States to make good on their pledges of assistance bearing in mind that the 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 express its appreciation for the efforts being undertaken by the United Nations system and relevant stakeholders to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the world. Let us strengthen our collaboration to make gender equality and the empowerment of women a reality.

I thank you.