



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS



STATEMENT

ON BEHALF OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

BY

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IN THE THIRD COMMITTEE

**on
Agenda Item 29:
Advancement of Women**

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Mr. Chairman,

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on Agenda Item 29: Advancement of Women at this sixty-seventh session of the UN General Assembly. Allow me at the outset to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election and to reaffirm CARICOM's full support and cooperation for the successful fulfillment of your mandate.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for the reports before the Committee under this agenda item.

CARICOM aligns itself with the statements made by the distinguished representatives of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and of Chile on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), respectively.

Mr. Chairman,

The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women commands a place of prominence among the priorities of the Caribbean Community. Caribbean history, from slavery and indentureship to independence, bears ample testimony to the crucial role played by women at every stage and in all aspects of the region's development. On the occasion of International Women's Day in March, 2012, the Secretary-General of CARICOM gave renewed expression to our Community's pride in the significant contribution of our women to the stability and development of the region and called for a recommitment of our collective efforts to foster equality, justice and peace for all. CARICOM takes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman, CARICOM States continue to strive for 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 policies and programmes, enhancing education and training opportunities for women and girls, and increasing the participation of women in leadership and decision-making.

Mr. Chairman,

Violence against women remains one of the critical social challenges of our time. It is estimated that globally as many as 7 in 10 women experience some level of physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime. And this is despite the impressive array of actions of a legislative, policy or programmatic character adopted in over 100 countries to which the Secretary-General attests in his report entitled, 'Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women' [A/67/220]. Laws to criminalize and/or otherwise respond to the phenomenon of violence against women, national plans or strategies, prevention activities and awareness-raising campaigns have had a cumulatively limited impact. This speaks to a systemic failure of implementation of the various measures adopted since 'Beijing' to reverse the horrific tide of physical and mental trauma that is inflicted upon women on a daily basis.

Under this rubric, one problem area of particular salience within the CARICOM context, which is of great concern to our Governments, is that concerning domestic violence. We can all agree that violence against women has devastating effects on individuals and societies. It constrains achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and results in high socio-economic costs. CARICOM concurs with the Secretary-General's recommendations that more effective legal frameworks are needed to secure gender equality and protect women's human rights, and that all sectors of the community should be engaged to challenge gender stereotypes and social norms that perpetuate violence against women.

Mr. Chairman,

Cognizant of the positive role of community activism in seeking solutions to the problems we face, CARICOM has undertaken several preventive initiatives at the regional level. On the occasion of International Women's Day, 8 March of this year, our Region launched a series of campaign materials on gender-based violence to promote positive attitudes and behaviours and a more gender sensitive community. In May 2012 three young women from CARICOM participated in the first Global UNiTE Youth Forum, which was organized by the Secretary-General's global campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women. Also in May, 2012, a CARICOM national was appointed to the UN Women's Global Civil Society Advisory Group. And on July 25, 2012 the first in a series of Global UNiTe "Orange Day" campaigns to raise awareness about the issue of violence against women and girls was launched, based on the work which was developed in July 2011 by 15 Caribbean artists titled "Caribbean Artists UNITE-ing against gender-based violence". Activities will be undertaken in every consecutive month leading up to the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2013.

Mr. Chairman,

At the national level, CARICOM Member States have enhanced legislative measures and developed monitoring frameworks to address gender-based violence. In this connection, I extend the appreciation of our Community to UN Women for their valuable support and assistance in the formulation of programmes and legislative reform initiatives. With the support of UNIFEM, a standardized court-based batterer intervention programme for the Caribbean titled 'Partnership for Peace - A Domestic Violence Intervention' was introduced in several CARICOM Member States to engage men in confronting negative gender stereotypes and accepting their role and responsibility in ending violence against women. We are thankful to UN Women also for its support in the establishment of a Caribbean Young Women's Transformational Leadership Programme which is geared towards enhancing leadership and decision-making skills of women and particularly to the empowerment of young women.

In this regard, the 2011 UN Women Handbook for National Action Plans on Violence against Women, which was the result of an expert group meeting held in Trinidad and Tobago in September 2010, can contribute to existing action plans and help to develop new and comprehensive action plans on violence against women.

Mr. Chairman,

In terms of education, most CARICOM Member States have achieved the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education. The education of girls is one of the significant achievements in our region. Females now out-perform their male counterparts at the Secondary and Tertiary levels. However, the region still faces cultural and attitudinal biases that perpetuate gender stereotypes in the educational system, particularly in the field of science and technology, as highlighted during the 55th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

The health of our women and girls remains of great concern. A woman's right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is articulated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. CARICOM continues to face challenges in stemming the tide of HIV/AIDS and in addressing the escalation of non-communicable diseases, both of which disproportionately affect too many of our young women. Young women in the region are believed to be the most vulnerable group in the spread and transmission of HIV/AIDS. CARICOM Member States are addressing these challenges at the national and regional levels through a number of initiatives, including gender mainstreaming and analysis in HIV programmes in the Caribbean and enhanced advocacy and action networks.

Mr. Chairman,

Rural women play an integral role in the development of our region. The theme of this year's 56th session of CSW, "the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges" highlighted the important role of rural women to the sustainability of rural communities and to food security. Rural women constitute one-fourth of the world's population and FAO data suggests rural women comprise 25 per cent of the agricultural labour force in CARICOM Member States. Their contributions are vital to the well-being of families, communities and societies, and to the achievement of the MDGs.

Mr. Chairman,

As is the case in many regions of the world, rural women in our region face a number of challenges, among them poverty and inadequate access to social services and basic health services. Evidently, more attention must be dedicated to the challenges of rural women at the regional level. As we observe today, 15 October - International Day of Rural Women, CARICOM reiterates its commitment to working with all partners with a view to enhancing social and economic opportunities for rural women everywhere.

Mr. Chairman,

The elimination of all forms of discrimination against women is as vital to women's development as is the issue of the elimination of violence against women. CARICOM reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In this regard, CARICOM takes this opportunity to register its concern at the recent decision taken by the Committee to convene in Geneva all of its sessions to consider reports of States Parties. This will present significant challenges for many

small States like those in CARICOM, many of whom are without representation in Geneva. CARICOM urges a reconsideration of this decision.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, CARICOM welcomes the recognition of the vital role that women can and do play in all pillars of the work of the Organization, as affirmed by the Secretary-General in his report, 'Measures taken and follow-up to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly [A/67/185]'. The Report however notes that little progress has been made in integrating a gender perspective in the areas of disarmament and international security. In this regard, CARICOM Member States were pleased to co-sponsor the resolution on 'women, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation,' to highlight the important role of women in the field of disarmament, which was tabled in the First Committee by the delegation of Trinidad and Tobago during the 65th session and will be considered again this session,.

Furthermore, in recognition of the vital role of women in development, CARICOM strongly supports the inclusion of gender equality and the empowerment of women as an integral component of the post-2015 development framework. Recognising that sustainable development cannot be realized without taking into account the gender dimension, CARICOM was represented among the women Heads of State or Government that signed the Call to Action: The Future Women Want - at the Rio+20 Conference.

CARICOM calls for the intensification of international action and political will to address the myriad challenges facing women throughout the world.

I thank you.