



Report on the Trinidad and Tobago delegation to the Caribbean Stakeholder Meeting ahead of the 25th Anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action held in Barbados on February 10-11, 2020

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Background of the Meeting

ParlAmeicas in collaboration with UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean, the Institute for Gender and Development Studies: Nita Barrow Unit at the University of the West Indies Cave Hill; Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL), the Westminster Foundation for Democracy; and CARICOM, organised a multi-stakeholder Regional Planning meeting entitled **Building a coordinated position for Caribbean negotiations on Beijing +25.**

The meeting was held on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, ahead of the 64th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64) that was scheduled for March 9-20, 2020 at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA,

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPA) was adopted at the United Nation's Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, China, in 1995 and is considered the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights and for women's empowerment, it aims at removing all of the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through ensuring women a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.

The Declaration and Platform for Action affirms that equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice. It is also what global officials say "is a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace," and covers twelve areas, among them, Women and Poverty, Education and training of women, Women and Health, Violence Against Women, Women and the Economy, and Women in power and Decision-making, among others.

Highlights of the Meeting

The purpose of the meeting was to come together in a united front to support the region's alignment of political messaging and advocacy at the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women and ahead of various other important international and regional meetings on Gender Equality commitments.

The meeting brought together Ministers, Parliamentarians, representatives from multilateral organisations, Gender Machineries from the Caribbean countries, as well as representatives from Civil Society. Eleven Caribbean Community countries were represented at the meeting, namely; Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago.

The Government of the Republic Trinidad and Tobago was represented by representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs) and the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. The delegation comprised the following persons:

- The Honourable Ayanna Webster- Roy, Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs)
- Director of Gender (Acting) Ms Antoinette Jack-Martin in the Office of the Prime Minister (Gender and Child Affairs)
- Ms Christine Newallo-Hosein, Opposition Member of Parliament for Cumuto/Manzanilla



Representation of Ministers at the Meeting

Remarks

The proceedings began with welcome remarks from each of the sponsors and organizers of the conference.

- Ms Alison McLean, Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean,
- Dr. Letnie Rock, Acting Head, Institute for Gender and Development Studies: Nita Barrow Unit, The University of the West Indies Cave Hill,
- Ms Sophia Fernandes, Commonwealth Programme Director at Westminster Foundation for Democracy
- Ms Ann-Marie Williams, Deputy Programme Manager Gender and Development, CARICOM; His Honour Arthur E. Holder, Speaker of the House of Assembly, Barbados and member of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors and
- Lady Anande Trotman-Joseph, President, Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL).

The keynote address was done by the Honourable Cynthia Forde, J.P., M.P., Minister of People; Empowerment and Elder Affairs, Barbados. In her address she emphasized the significance of the Beijing Declaration and saw it as the most visionary agenda for women’s empowerment.

Some of the areas discussed at the meeting included the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the Progress of the Caribbean: From Beijing’s Pillars to Generation Equality’s Themes; Introduction to Negotiations; Establishing Caribbean Priorities in Regional and Global Negotiating Spaces; Developing Common Ground on Issues of Concern; and Process and Next Steps for Input into the Political Declaration.

Introduction to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Day 1 Session 1

The session highlighted the process of the acceleration of gender equality as well as some areas of concerns that is prohibiting the progress. Some of the areas highlighted were Violence against women, the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women, Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources.

A briefing on Generation Equality Forum and Action Coalitions was also shared. The Generation Equality campaign demands equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, an end to sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women and girls, health-care services that respond to their needs and their equal participation in political life and decision-making in all areas of life.

Overview of the Caribbean Progress

Session 2

This session provide an introduction to the twelve (12) action areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and how they correspond with the six (6) themes identified under Generation Equality. The areas looked at were, Poverty and its link to women's education, Cross cutting Youth engagement, Gender Based Violence, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Right, Feminist action for climate change, Technology and Innovation for gender equality, Feminist movement and leadership, Caribbean institutions and network as well as the Caribbean Joint Statement on Gender Equality.

Gender Based Violence Presentation

Presentation on Gender Based Violence was presented by Ms Elaine Henry McQueen of Grenada and the highlights were that there were core elements and actions that were needed to eliminate GBV. Those fell under the broad headings of Protection and support of victims, Prevention, Comprehensive responses to end Violence Against Women, Coordination and Governance of Coordination.

The highlights of the presentation were that all Caribbean nations recognized and prioritize the issue of Gender Based Violence. They all have Legislation, Action and Protocols to address Gender Based Violence, conducted Prevalence surveys established Specialized Services, Emergency Centres and Shelters, Engaged in and established Training for Public Officers example Police Officers, Health Workers and engages in Awareness Raising Campaigns to address this issue.

Introduction to Negotiations

Session 3

This session provided background information on how to engage effectively in regional and global forums and the importance of negotiating as a CARICOM bloc to advance common priorities. The session was led by Dr. Rosina Wiltshire who focused on practical guidance for engaging effectively in regional and global forums in pursuit of gender equality. Ms Davita Abraham, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Trinidad and Tobago briefed participants via Skype, about the negotiation steps and guidelines on the process and timelines for inputs into the Draft Political Declaration which was issued.

Establishing Caribbean Priorities in Regional and Global Negotiating Spaces

Day 2 Session 4 Working Groups

Participants were placed in working groups using as reference a Draft Political Declaration that was issued in January 2020 and was being negotiated internationally ahead of CSW64. Discussions were centred around areas such as; Economic Justice and Rights, Gender-Based Violence and Citizen Security, Climate Justice and Feminist Action, and Technology as if people mattered as a means of establishing Caribbean priorities in Regional and Global negotiating spaces with the goal of developing common sub-regional positions.

Developing Common Ground on Issues of Concern

Session 5

The conclusions developed by each working group were then presented in plenary for further feedback and consensus building. Looking ahead to CSW64, the participants agreed on the need to ensure that Caribbean countries contributed actively through the formal channels that exist to provide inputs on the Political Declaration. They stressed the importance of timely information-sharing for this purpose, and it was agreed that the CARICOM Secretariat had an important on-going role to play.

Roundtable discussions at the Meeting



The Honourable Minister in the working group that discussed Gender-based Violence and Citizen Security

Outcome of the Meeting

The Caribbean consensus felt that there was the need to increase political and technical contributions to the CSW Political Declaration and to other negotiated documents related to gender equality.

The Honourable Ayanna Webster-Roy indicated the need for Gender to be placed on the agenda for the next Intersessional Meeting so that the Heads of the various CARICOM countries to determine clear policy positions on Gender and Gender related issues.

A unified Caribbean input into the Political Declaration, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women attached as **Appendix 1** was sanctioned and agreed to be presented to the UN Assembly at the 64th Commission of the Status of Women in New York, thus reaffirming the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and committing to the full, effective and accelerated implementations.