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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean
CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND CO-OPERATION COMMITTEE



REPORT ON THE MEETING OF DELEGATES FROM CDCC COUNTRIES
ATTENDING THE REGIONAL MEETING OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
PREPARATORY TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE TO REVIEW AND APPRAISE
THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE FOR WOMEN:
EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE
18 November 1984, Havana, Cuba



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1. In compliance with the decision of CDCC at its eighth session (Haiti, 6-12 June 1984), a meeting of the CDCC delegations to the Regional Meeting of Latin America and the Caribbean, Preparatory to the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, was held in La Habana, Cuba, 18 November 1984, one day prior to the Regional Meeting.^{1/}
2. The objectives of this meeting were to exchange information on current and planned country programmes; to discuss, from a Caribbean perspective, issues to be considered at the Regional Meeting; and to seek a common Caribbean position.
3. Madame Andrée St. Lot of Haiti presided over the meeting, while Ms. Karleen Greenidge of St. Lucia served as Rapporteur.

Progress achieved

4. The Secretariat introduced document LC/CAR/L.124(SEM.4/1) - CDCC/UNDW/84/1 entitled "Review and Appraisal of the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace in the Caribbean".
5. This document provides a review and assessment of the implementation in the Caribbean subregion of the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace; the sub-themes Employment, Health and Education; it also provides guidance for the formulation of operational strategies for the year 2000 from the Caribbean viewpoint.

^{1/} The List of Participants is shown at Annex I.

6. Delegations emphasized that in the Caribbean the Decade was set within the wider context of the traditional struggle of the Caribbean people, especially women, for individual and collective self-reliance and self-assertiveness. The objectives of the Decade were also consistent with the guiding principles of integration and co-operation of the CDCC and the full participation of women in development.

7. The major achievements identified at the meeting were:

- (a) The growing awareness among women of their own strength and potential;
- (b) The establishment by Governments of national machineries responsible for women's programmes in recognition of the need for integrating women in the development process;
- (c) The maintenance of historically acquired educational levels and positive health indicators. In addition specific provisions have been made for maternity leave in most countries of the subregion;
- (d) The expanded role of NGOs with respect to women in development;
- (e) The increase in technical support from regional and international organizations;
- (f) The undertaking of research efforts on issues related to women in the subregion.

8. Two delegations expressed concern on the issue of higglers and hucksters referred to in paragraph 12 of document LC/CAR/L.124(SEM.4/1) - CDCC/UNDW/84/1. Their Governments regard the activity of women as higglers and hucksters beyond national boundaries, as illegal, a threat to the national economy, and undermining efforts towards self-reliance and the use of national resources.

9. Another delegation noted, however, that the ability of Caribbean women to deal with the current economic crisis, and the self-assertiveness and strength displayed through engagement in this economic activity should also be recognized.

10. The Secretariat, in clarifying the thrust of paragraph 12, noted that it indicated forms in which the traditional higglering/huckstering economy has developed, and noted that the achievements mentioned therein refer precisely to the skills and potentials demonstrated by women engaged in this activity. These skills could, in the future, be channelled towards the advancement of the women themselves, their families, communities and their countries as a whole.

11. It was also pointed out that there are cases in the subregion where women engaging in this activity benefit from training programmes and other social services provided in situ aimed at improving their condition.

12. One delegation noted the progress made in her country in the process of institutionalization of collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organizations responsible for women's programmes.

Obstacles encountered

13. The last years of the Decade have witnessed a worsening of the general economic situation in the subregion. The financial, economic and social crisis of the developing world has resulted in a worsening of the situation of large sectors of the population especially women. In particular, the decline in economic activity was having a negative impact on an already unbalanced distribution of income as well as on levels of employment especially for women.

14. Some delegations noted the limiting effects of further reduction of investment in social services and infrastructures, and in general, the reduction of government expenditure in the social field.

15. There was general concern for the lack of human and financial resources available to the national machineries for women established during the Decade. Delegations identified this situation as one of the most important obstacles to the implementation of the programmes within the framework of the objectives of the Decade.

16. It was stated that the lack of explicit recognition of the many fundamental roles women play in the production, processing and distribution of food could be responsible for the deteriorating situation of rural development programmes throughout the Caribbean and consequently, for part of the economic crisis.

17. Some delegations pointed out that there is evidence in the Caribbean, of increased use of physical and psychological violence against women. Deterioration of living conditions include increased drug abuse, involuntary prostitution, street violence and criminal acts affecting women in terms of health and personal dignity, while also limiting their potential to be their own agents in development. It was considered that this deterioration also affected human rights in the subregion.

18. Several delegations mentioned problems caused by the increased burden on elderly rural women, due to continued and unabated migration during the Decade. Mention was also made of the increasing problems of young women who, as a result of teenage pregnancy, face reduced access to education, and other social services.

19. It was noted that women have played a significant role in activities designed to foster cultural transfer and development. However, national and international agencies have not always recognized its value as a resource for strengthening projects for women's self-reliance and self-assertiveness.

20. Delegations noted the slow advance in communicating adequate images of women and their contribution to the process of development. The mass media continues to transmit stereotyped prejudices and sex-oriented images of women hampering their recognition as valuable and equal social and economic participants.

21. Most delegations addressed the problem of insufficient financial and technical external assistance for the promotion of programmes and projects. Moreover, it was pointed out that most of the assistance received was directed towards the solution of very specific and narrow economic problems, while support for social development did not receive an adequate share. This was considered a major obstacle in the subregion during the Decade.

22. It was noted that although some progress had been made in the preparation of amendments to existing legislation, until such amendments were enacted women would continue to be disadvantaged by discriminatory legislation.

23. The persistent external aggression and its accompanying militarization process in the subregion was considered as a serious obstacle to the peaceful and effective achievement of the goals of the Decade. Moreover, the use of military force and increased military spending in the subregion has had a negative effect on the traditional process of negotiation in the Caribbean.

Strategies

24. Several delegations insisted on the need for strengthening national machineries, established during the Decade, in order to guarantee effective pursuit of the advancement of women up to the year 2000.

25. It was noted that member Governments of CDCC would welcome support from international agencies for the preparation of project proposals at national level. It was suggested that emphasis be given to projects which promote facilities for the exchange of Caribbean personnel working in the area of women and development.



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
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