

Report of the ECLAC/CDCC Third Caribbean
Ministerial Conference on Women: Review and
Appraisal of the FWCW Platform for Action
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**REPORT OF THE ECLAC/CDCC THIRD CARIBBEAN MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE FWCW
PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

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The Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, secretariat of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC), Third Caribbean Ministerial Conference on Women: Review and Appraisal of the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) - Platform for Action was held at the Hilton Hotel, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 5 – 7 October 1999.

Nineteen CDCC member and associate member countries were present, namely: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and Turks and Caicos. There was also participation from several organizations, such as, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Gender Equity Fund, Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM), Commonwealth Secretariat (COM SEC), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Also present at the meeting were representatives from two civil society organizations, six Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), one academic institution and special invited guests. The list of participants of the meeting is attached as Annex II.

At the opening ceremony, welcoming remarks and addresses were delivered by Dr. Len Ishmael, Director, ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, Ms. Gemma Tang Nain, Deputy Programme Manager, Caribbean Community Secretariat, The Honourable Indranie Chandarpal, Minister within the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, Cooperative Republic of Guyana, and Senator Carol Cuffy-Dowlath, Acting Minister in the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs, Trinidad and Tobago. The feature address was delivered by Dr. Joycelin Massiah, Regional Programme Adviser, UNIFEM.

Ms. Asha Kambon, Social Affairs Officer, ECLAC/CDCC secretariat chaired the opening proceedings. She welcomed delegates to the conference and to Trinidad and Tobago and assured that, given the delegates present, a fruitful three days was expected.

Dr. Len Ishmael, in her welcoming remarks, stated that the main purpose of the meeting was to evaluate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action of the FWCW. This review process formed just one component of a global review that would culminate in a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly to be convened in June 2000 on the theme: "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century". She reminded the delegates that the review and appraisal process encouraged and provided the opportunity for governments to assess their policies and programmes and to plot the way forward towards an accelerated and efficient implementation of all the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action. Dr. Ishmael drew attention to the fact that the exercise, which was a public one, strengthened accountability and civil society input into the planning process.

While noting areas of progress in gender equity in the region, she reflected, in particular, on the issues of poverty and violence against women which continued to impede the advancement of women in the region. In concluding, Dr. Ishmael drew attention to ECLAC's mandate in the subregion to provide strategic information and technical assistance to governments, where required, for policy formulation.

Ms. Gemma Tang Nain of the CARICOM Secretariat brought greetings from CARICOM and affirmed CARICOM's support for the work being done to advance gender equity in the region. She noted the importance of the review process and pointed out that CARICOM had focused on six major issues since the FWCW: (a) violence; (b) women and poverty; (c) health; (d) education and training; (e) power and decision-making; and (f) institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women. In addition to focusing on sectoral issues, CARICOM countries were giving serious attention to gender mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving gender equality in the region.

The Honourable Mrs. Indranie Chandarpal, Minister within the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security, Cooperative Republic of Guyana recognised the fact that strides had been made by women in the region since 1975. She noted, however, that there was still the need for greater emphasis to be placed on the rights of women and the availability of opportunities to facilitate the attainment of full equality in politics, government, business and in the economic, social and cultural realms. In closing, Minister Chandarpal expressed her hope that the exchange of views, ideas and experiences would assist in arriving at satisfactory solutions to attain the ultimate goal of gender equity.

Dr. Joycelin Massiah, Regional Programme Adviser, UNIFEM, delivered the feature address. She brought greetings from the Directorate of UNIFEM

and from colleagues all over the world, who were making similar preparations for contributing to the Beijing + 5 review process. She gave delegates an historical review of the preparatory process in the Caribbean for the Fourth World Conference on Women and recalled the period immediately following the Beijing conference and the meetings held in October 1995 and, more specifically, the meeting held in Georgetown, Guyana, in August 1997, which led to the formulation of the Georgetown Consensus. She cited some of the lessons learnt from the Beijing process which included the need for a sustainable, creative networking process; the need for an understanding of developmental policies and their relationship to gender and the need to work on the issue of women's leadership.

Dr. Massiah identified the constraints to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action as including economic and other forms of insecurity created by globalisation and trade liberalisation and the reduction in development aid. More specific constraints identified included increasing violence against women, women's lack of economic and legal literacy and the weakness of women's NGOs. Beyond a strengthening of the NGO sector, Dr. Massiah called for greater efforts in increasing the linkages between general development policy goals and gender equity. In conclusion, Dr. Massiah pointed out that the goals of gender equity and development in the region were attainable thorough processes which emphasised cooperation, collaboration, continuity, cohesion and a commitment to the Caribbean region.

Greetings on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Honourable Senator Daphne Phillips, Minister of Culture and Gender Affairs in the Ministry of Culture and Gender Affairs, were conveyed by Senator Carol Cuffy-Dowlat.

Election of the Bureau of Presiding Officers

The meeting elected the following persons to the Bureau of Presiding Officers:

Chairman:	Trinidad and Tobago
First Vice-Chairman:	Haiti
Second Vice-Chairman:	Saint Lucia
Third Vice-Chairman:	Suriname
Rapporteur:	Grenada

Adoption of the agenda

The meeting adopted the agenda and agreed to the hours of work as proposed by the Chair.

Presentation of the working draft of the subregional report

The paper “The Caribbean Subregional Review and Appraisal on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action” was prepared and presented by the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat. Based on the information contained in country reports received from Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Netherlands Antilles, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and the Turks and Caicos, the paper summarised the implementation, in the ECLAC/CDCC member countries, of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The paper highlighted that in the region the following critical areas had been prioritised by governments:

- (a) Poverty and the economy;
- (b) Inequality in health care and related services;
- (c) All forms of violence against women;
- (d) Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making; and
- (e) The girl child.

The country reports revealed that in various ways since 1995, Caribbean governments had sought to achieve higher measures of social stability, integration and gender equity. Particular commitments had been made to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and to strengthen the protection of human rights. In this regard, the enactment of domestic violence legislation across the region had had fundamental significance and impact.

The national machineries for women were at present generally stronger technically, with improved levels of resources. The machineries also appeared to be less isolated from national development planning. Consequent upon the detailed strategic actions outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action, there was a clearer understanding of the need to incorporate or mainstream gender analysis and planning into development planning generally.

However, despite the progress made, it was asserted that women in the Caribbean continued to bear the brunt of responsibility for social reproduction, and for the caring of all categories of vulnerable persons within the Caribbean, even whilst they had fewer opportunities for employment and had higher levels of underemployment and unemployment than their male counterparts. Although increasing State resources were directed at violence against women, the combination of patriarchal gender relations and a pervasive culture of violence had meant that women's personal integrity and security appeared more threatened in the contemporary period now than in previous periods. Whilst women's participation in the political process as voters and campaigners was significant, this participation had not translated into increased numbers of women in elected office within the parliamentary system. As a result of this and of weak community structures, women remained marginal to and excluded from the process of the identification of economic development priorities.

In the area of education, the paper noted the relative absence of gender discrimination in access to education. One notable exception to this in some countries was the debarring of teenage mothers from attendance at schools. Additionally, within the region, governments had identified the need for curriculum reform to remove negative and stereotyped gender images from the school textbooks.

The report presented key initiatives in the region in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and made recommendations around the themes of gender equity and human rights, violence and peace.

Recommendations

The meeting recommended a number of inclusions and/or adjustments to the report. In addition, the following recommendations were made:

- (a) The establishment of an inter-agency task force in each country comprising members of the social sectors, ministries and NGOs for the purpose of monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action;
- (b) Enactment of legislation to protect the rights of domestic workers;
- (c) Increased access to legal aid, where available, and the establishment of legal aid programmes in countries where such did not exist; and
- (d) The need to ensure implementation of enacted legislation.

Presentation of selected country reports

Selected countries presented reports on the thematic areas of gender equity and human rights, peace and violence. The reports focused on good practices or examples of successful policies or programmes; most serious constraints; obstacles; lessons learnt; identification of emerging trends; and commitment to further action

The country reports were followed by discussions led by a discussant who reflected on the experiences of implementation and identified emerging issues.

Panel One: Gender equity: Poverty and the economy

Cuba, Dominica Jamaica and Haiti presented country reports.

The representative of Cuba reported that poverty among women in rural locations, unemployment and women's access to health and education services were the critical areas engaging governmental attention. Cuba faced limited budget resources as a result of the continuing trade embargo imposed by the Government of the United States of America and the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe.

The delegate informed the meeting that subsequent to the Beijing conference, the Cuban Government developed a plan of action identifying priority areas of concern for women in respect of economic and social development. The relevant government ministries and other public and private organizations had been collaborating effectively to promote the advancement of women.

In her presentation, the representative of Jamaica stated that through the Bureau of Women Affairs (BWA), the Government of Jamaica had examined the disproportionate impact of poverty on the female population. As a means of assisting the unskilled young women and grassroots women in society, the BWA had promoted micro-enterprise initiatives to achieve the economic empowerment of women.

The Jamaican Government faced a number of constraints or obstacles in implementing strategies to eradicate poverty. These included a lack of financial resources; high unemployment rates, especially among young women; social unrest and crime and violence. Nevertheless, it was reported that Jamaica was committed to pursuing all facets of the thrust towards gender equity, and that preparations were already underway to ensure meaningful participation by

Jamaica at the Special Session of the General Assembly on “Women 2000: gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century”.

The representative of Haiti drew attention to the main obstacle encountered by the Haitian Government, that of the widespread political and social instability which hampered the development and implementation of policies and programmes for poverty alleviation. The delegate reflected on the capacity of Haitian women to mobilise politically and considered that one of the main lessons learnt since the Fourth World Conference on Women was the need to ensure women’s participation in all areas of decision-making.

The representative of Dominica informed the meeting that certain studies had revealed that structural adjustment programmes implemented in Dominica had had a significantly adverse impact on female-headed households. Female heads typically had lower earnings, fewer assets, less access to productive resources and lower levels of education than did their male counterparts. The meeting was also informed that the decline in the banana industry had increased poverty levels for women, especially in rural areas. Although there were a number of credit institutions that focused on women, few women benefited from their credit, since women were not able to meet the creditors’ requirements for collateral such as legal title to land.

The meeting was informed that Dominica had not developed a specific poverty policy which focused on women, though there were a number of initiatives promoted by funding agencies which incorporated the gender perspective.

Included in the constraints identified in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action were: (a) inadequate understanding by policy makers of the imperatives of gender analysis and planning; (b) inadequate human and financial resources; and (c) absence of a focused national policy and plan on gender.

Ms. Asha Kambon, Social Affairs Officer, ECLAC/CDCC secretariat, the discussant for the panel, asserted that national machineries for women within the subregion had a pivotal role to play in ensuring that the macroeconomic policies pursued were conducive to the fulfilment of gender equity goals. In this context, the national machineries were urged to participate more fully in an examination and analysis of the content of macroeconomic policies and on their actual and potential impact on the attainment of gender equity goals. Beyond ensuring the incorporation of the gender perspective in economic planning, the meeting observed that the national machineries for women should develop economic literacy programmes for women to facilitate a wider participation in decision-making.

In the ensuing discussion the following issues were raised:

(a) The need to analyze the impact of globalization and liberalization on women living in poverty;

(b) The need for a clearer definition of poverty, recognising that economic indicators might distort the understanding of levels of poverty that actually existed; and

(c) Governments needed to encourage greater levels of exchange among the national machineries for women within the subregion.

Panel Two: Gender equity: Women in power and decision-making and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

Guyana, Suriname, the Dominican Republic and Saint Lucia presented country reports.

The representative from Guyana informed the meeting that the Women's Bureau in that country had been established in January 1981. The Women's Bureau formed one component of the portfolio of the Ministry of Human Services and Social Security and functioned primarily as a policy formulation unit. She pointed to the fact that the numbers of women in power and decision making positions within the political structure had not increased significantly over the years since the Beijing conference, though in the public sector there was an increased presence of women in administrative positions.

Certain legislative initiatives had been undertaken to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, including the enactment of anti-discrimination legislation and domestic violence legislation. With regard to the implementation of gender mainstreaming, the meeting's attention was drawn to the development of a National Policy on Women and to the establishment of two mechanisms, namely, the National Commission on Women and the Inter-Ministerial Committee.

Attention in Guyana had been given to increasing societal awareness of gender issues through publications, public discussions, workshops and seminars. However, human and financial resource constraints continued to hinder the implementation of programmes designed to advance gender equity. In spite of resource inadequacies, one gender mainstreaming initiative implemented was the analysis of the national budgets as they affected the welfare of women, with particular emphasis on the special needs of indigenous and rural women.

The representative of Saint Lucia informed the meeting that, like elsewhere in the Caribbean, women were underrepresented within the political structures, though there were two female ministers in the present Saint Lucian Government. The Division of Gender Affairs was located in a ministry that had responsibility for health, human services and family affairs. The delegate advanced the view that ministries, so configured, were as important as ministries which focused on economic issues.

Advances in attaining gender equity in Saint Lucia included legislative reform in family law, child maintenance, maternity benefits and the establishment of a family court. In relation to women's access to power and decision-making, difficulties for women continued to be a lack of recognition for their supportive efforts of political parties, the need to work harder than men to achieve political recognition, the assignment of female ministers to social ministries rather than to ministries which controlled and determined the allocation of finances; the negative stigmatisation of political involvement by women and the competing pressures of being the primary caregiver in the family.

The Saint Lucian representative felt that women had to be encouraged to participate in the political processes at all levels. One mechanism suggested was the provision of training in the political and parliamentary processes.

The delegate from Suriname advised the meeting of the Surinamese Government's commitment to comply with international human rights norms on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. A Gender Bureau had been established and a gender policy was currently being formulated in consultation with NGOs.

Following the ECLAC/CDCC Second Caribbean Ministerial Conference on Women during which the ECLAC/CDCC member States reiterated their commitment to the incorporation of the gender perspective in national development policies and programmes, the Surinamese delegate reported that a gender mainstreaming initiative had recently been instituted and technicians from various ministries were being trained in gender analysis and planning. The Surinamese delegate informed the meeting of the establishment of a women's parliamentary forum which was focused on the training of women in political skills in order to facilitate their participation in the national parliament.

Obstacles to the implementation of the inclusion of gender issues in development planning included legislative inadequacies, the lack of financial resources and the absence of sex-disaggregated data.

Dr. Eudine Barriteau, Head, Centre for Gender Studies, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, stated that while increasing the numbers of women involved in the political process as decision makers was necessary, it was not a sufficient precondition to ensuring the formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive national development policies. In this regard, Dr. Barriteau advocated the training of women in gender analysis to ensure an effective transformative role in national policy around gender issues. She stated that women's bureaux should be aware that gender mainstreaming was a technical exercise and, therefore, recognised the need for training to ensure more efficient programme development and implementation.

Dr. Barriteau noted the increased presence of women in middle management positions and the relative lack of women in senior management positions. She pointed out that the gender ideology which ascribed to men leadership roles and to women supportive roles was still operative in the politics of the region. Women, therefore, needed to recognise their constituent power within political parties and use this leverage to obtain acceptance and support for women candidates. Dr. Barriteau also pointed out that women's responsibilities for child care and household maintenance effectively prevented their full participation in the political process.

The roundtable discussion focused on the need for the national machineries for women to be aware of their appropriate role and of the level of resources necessary for effectiveness. It was also felt that there was a need for greater articulation or coordination between the machineries and sectoral ministries.

One contribution stressed that the impact of political change on these mechanisms also needed to be considered, since frequent changes in political administrations led to disruptions of programmes being pursued as they did to the composition of the national machineries for women.

In response to comments that women were given ministerial responsibility only in the social sector, it was felt that the importance of these ministries should not be trivialised since programmes out of such ministries impacted significantly on women's lives.

The call was made for women to consider that the objective of attaining political office would be lost if more participatory modalities of leadership were not encouraged. In this regard, a need was identified for specialised management training for women leaders.

Panel Three: Human rights, peace and violence

Anguilla, Barbados, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago presented country reports.

The Barbados presentation stressed women's equal enjoyment of constitutional rights and protection from discrimination save and except with regard to citizenship laws. In the years since the FWCW, the Women's Bureau had collaborated with several sectoral ministries in an attempt to ensure the incorporation of the gender analysis and planning in the preparation of the national development plan, the national budget and the planning for the labour and employment sector. In addition, a National Advisory Council on Women had been reappointed and the several women's organizations had assisted the Bureau of Women's Affairs in matters of policy and project implementation.

In implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, Barbados had prioritised the areas of violence against women and poverty. In addressing the issue of violence against women, focus had been given to education and public awareness and media training and sensitization. Education and skills training and micro industry development had been the primary strategies employed to combat poverty amongst women.

Barriers to gender equity still remained and governmental plans included the design of more effective human development programmes, better services for victims of abuse, and the facilitation and encouragement of women's participation in politics.

The representative of Anguilla pointed out that legislation on domestic violence had been enacted in Anguilla but that public education was still needed to bring the legislation to the attention of the Anguillan population. Gender training of the police continued to be a matter demanding attention.

In the area of women's access to and enjoyment of reproductive rights, the delegate informed the meeting that while it was not a legal requirement, health workers continued to discriminate against women by demanding the consent of male partners as a condition for performing certain surgical procedures, such as, tubal ligation and hysterectomies.

The Anguillan representative considered that the women's bureaux in the Caribbean should participate more fully in policy development and planning while de-emphasising the delivery of social services and welfare.

The representative from Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reported that women's enjoyment of their human rights was monitored by the institutions

concerned with social welfare and the legal system as well as by the National Committee against Violence. She shared with the meeting the establishment in her country of a Family Court whose focus was on the resolution of family matters, including domestic violence. A protocol on reporting cases of domestic abuse had been drawn up and hotlines had been established to assist victims of gender violence. There was an initiative in place to produce educational pamphlets on the law and legal system with special emphasis on abuse cases. Efforts were being made to improve the collection of data from the family court for the purpose of analysis and policy formulation.

In relation to the rights of the girl child, efforts had been made to ensure that teenage mothers returned to school and a gender equality policy had been submitted to Cabinet which addressed in detail this issue.

The representative of Trinidad and Tobago focused on domestic violence and pointed to several government ministries, as well as NGOs, which worked in concert to arrest the problem. A number of NGOs operated shelters for abused women and had developed a networking system offering counseling, skills training and education. The National Violence Hotline established by the Government operated on a 24-hour service basis. A Task Force/Committee had been commissioned with Cabinet approval to develop a domestic violence policy.

The delegate reported that the domestic violence legislation was reviewed in 1999 and certain amendments had been enacted. The new Domestic Violence Act was more wide-ranging and provided harsher penalties for domestic violence offences. The delegate asserted that an integrated approach to violence against women was needed, one which stressed an examination of traditional socialisation practices; training in conflict resolution; increasing the understanding and awareness of the dimensions of gender violence; and media partnerships for effective change.

Obstacles to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action included the lack of financial assistance and the uncertainty of funding; inadequate staffing in the Gender Affairs Division; inadequate training of service providers, lack of sensitivity in the legal, medical and protective services and a need for still stronger networking for information sharing.

Dr. Barbara Bailey, Head, Centre for Gender Studies, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, in her discussion on the country presentations, observed that there was a common concern about the increased reports of violence towards women which threatened to erode the gains made on this issue.

She drew attention to the fact that the interventions to address the problem were predominantly responsive, with limited focus on addressing the root causes of violence against women. Dr. Bailey observed that while attention tended to be focused on violence by men against women, violence by men against men also occurred, as well as violence against older persons and violence within the schools. In all cases it was important to determine the root causes and to identify the institutions and cultural practices which reproduced violence. The socialisation patterns in the home, the community and schools all needed to be closely examined. Dr. Bailey cautioned that there was a need to be aware of and alert to the ideology which blamed women as victims for creating the atmosphere for violence.

The discussions which followed the discussant's presentation focussed on the imperatives of the identification of the root and catalytic causes of violence against women.

Agency reports

ECLAC/CDCC secretariat

The ECLAC/CDCC Activity Report was tabled for the meeting's consideration. The report documented that despite staff constraints in its Women in Development Unit during the period under review, it had been able to actively assist member governments in their attempts to implement the Platform for Action of the FWCW and the Regional Programme of Action for Latin America and the Caribbean.

In this regard, the secretariat convened two technical meetings of selected ECLAC/CDCC meetings in May 1999, the objective of which was to provide technical assistance to selected ECLAC/CDCC member countries in the preparation of their national reports for the Beijing Mid-Term Review.

The report also detailed that the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat had provided advice and technical assistance to ECLAC/CDCC member States in a number of areas, including the implementation of gender mainstreaming; the conduct of adolescent fertility surveys; and early childbearing and adolescent motherhood programmes.

UNFPA

The UNFPA representative outlined the organization's broad programme objectives for the period 1997 to 2001 as being twofold: (a) to create a population programme whose policies and implementation processes reflected the broad quality of life and sustainable development issues as mandated by

the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD); and (b) to create an overall social and political environment which allowed the population of the subregion, especially the youth, access to sexual and reproductive healthcare as a human right.

UNFPA had initiated programmes within the three main subprogrammes of its Caribbean Subregional Programme, namely (a) Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Programme; (b) Population and Development Strategies; and (c) Support of the Regional Advocacy Programme.

The meeting was informed that because of several factors, such as higher poverty levels among the youth and increasing gender inequality and gender-based violence, the countries of Guyana, Jamaica and Suriname were of particular concern to UNFPA.

UNIFEM

The meeting was informed that UNIFEM had been focusing on the empowerment of women as the primary objective of its post-Beijing mandate and, as such, had assumed a programmatic approach within three thematic areas: (a) globalization/trade liberalization; (b) human rights; and (c) government leadership. The main activities of UNIFEM's strategy, related to its thematic framework, consisted of the following:

- (a) Advocacy;
- (b) Brokering or collaboration;
- (c) Capacity building; and
- (d) Demonstration

Because of its small size, UNIFEM had to be catalytic in its programme activities and placed high priority on inter-agency collaboration with respect to the designing and implementation of programmes.

CARICOM

Ms. Gemma Tang-Nain, Deputy Programme Manager, CARICOM Secretariat, focused her presentation on a report of a meeting of Directors/Coordinators of Women's Bureaux held from 22-23 April 1999 in Basseterre, St. Kitts and Nevis. She informed that the CARICOM Secretariat had recommended that these issues be brought to the attention of the

Ministers with responsibility for Women's and Gender Affairs within CARICOM. Three such issues identified were:

- (a) Status and future direction of CARICOM Women's Affairs Bureaux. There is a need for policy makers to clarify the functions to be executed by these agencies;
- (b) Establishment of a commemorative day for domestic workers in CARICOM; and
- (c) Role of the recipients of the CARICOM triennial award for Women.

CIDA

The representative of CIDA presented the report of the Canada-CARICOM Gender Equity Fund. She informed that the Caribbean Division of CIDA's Americas Branch established a CARICOM Gender Equity Fund following the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. The Gender Equity Fund was designed to be responsive, catalytic and iterative. Its objectives aimed at advancing women's strategic interests through all aspects of their lives. As such, the Fund provided opportunities to ensure that women's voices were heard and that women not only participated in, but also enjoyed the benefits of change in their societies.

The Fund had focused on three key gender equality priorities, based on consensus agreements of pre- and post- Beijing follow-up meetings in the Caribbean. These were:

- (a) Reduction and prevention of violence against women and girls;
- (b) Poverty reduction – increased access to education and health; and
- (c) Economic, social and political empowerment of women.

The representative informed the meeting that during the period under review, the Canadian Gender Equity Fund (CGEF) had supported over 60 projects locally and six regional projects. In an effort to improve its effectiveness and efficiency in serving the region a draft regional Gender Equity Fund strategy had been developed.

NGO's report

As part of her report to the meeting, the representative of the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA) outlined the

participation of the CAFRA in the Eighth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean to be held in February 2000. In addition, several new initiatives had been undertaken by CAFRA in collaboration with intergovernmental agencies, including “The Caribbean Subregion of the Global Network of Women in Politics” and “The Regional Network of Domestic Workers in the Caribbean”.

She stated that governments of the Caribbean and the NGOs should enter into new levels of partnership for fulfilment of the goals of Beijing, and urged the governments to take certain initiatives, such as:

- (a) Increasing female representation in local and national governments and other decision-making bodies;
- (b) Recognize domestic workers as workers in law and practice and ensure that they received all the legal rights and protections accorded to other workers; and
- (c) Commit resources to enable capacity building in gender analysis and management in key institutions.

A presentation was also made by Ms. Tanya Taitt-Codrington, Youth Ambassador for UNFPA who stressed the need to ensure the widest enjoyment of human rights by girls and young women.

The study on gender mainstreaming among Caribbean subregional countries

The representative of the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat drew reference to the study on gender mainstreaming in five Caribbean countries prepared by ECLAC consultant, Ms. Sonja Harris.

She explained that the study had been commissioned to determine the extent of the implementation of the gender mainstreaming mandate and the impact which such implementation had for the advancement of gender equity. The Harris study was but one component of a larger 10 country survey on gender mainstreaming being conducted by ECLAC with funding assistance from CIDA.

The Harris study highlighted the fact that there were conceptual and definitional ambiguities around the terms “gender” and “gender mainstreaming”. In that regard, the ECLAC/CDCC representative stated that gender mainstreaming implied gender analysis and planning at all stages of the

development process. It was advanced that the tools indispensable for the promotion of the gender mainstreaming mandate were:

- (a) Gender analysis;
- (b) Gender planning;
- (c) Gender impact assessment and
- (d) Gender management systems.

Gender management systems

The representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat delivered a presentation on Gender Management Systems (GMS) development by the Commonwealth Secretariat and on which training had been conducted in the region since 1998. She described the gender management system as a network of structures, mechanisms and processes put in place within an existing organizational framework to guide, plan, monitor and evaluate the process of mainstreaming gender into all areas of the organization's work in order to achieve greater gender equality and equity within the context of sustainable development.

The Commonwealth Secretariat representative informed the meeting that training in the gender management systems had been conducted at several workshops in the Caribbean region and that much of this work had focused on the health sector.

Roundtable discussion

There was some discussion as to whether the gender management system as formulated by the Commonwealth Secretariat was a tool or an actual approach to gender mainstreaming. Since the gender management system framework was new to the Caribbean, it was suggested that a task force be established to inform and guide Caribbean countries.

There was agreement that while the Harris study revealed the need for gender impact assessments, the database for such had not been developed. The study pointed to the need for training in gender mainstreaming processes. In this regard, it was pointed out that the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat could provide technical assistance.

Reflections and vision (CARICOM Triennial Awardees)

Ms. Nesta Patrick, Ms. Magda Pollard and Dr. Joycelin Massiah, awardees of the CARICOM Women's Award, presented their reflections on gender equity and development in the Caribbean region.

The first recipient of the CARICOM Triennial Award, Ms. Nesta Patrick, addressed the meeting by recalling her involvement in voluntary organizations. In speaking about domestic violence, she concluded that men had not been prepared to accept women's advancement in society and felt that countries in the subregion had to establish male awareness programmes and counseling to prepare young men to accept the changes that existed. In closing, Ms. Patrick exhorted the delegates to continue their work on poverty, illiteracy and violence.

Ms. Magda Pollard traced the evolution of the Women's Desk in the CARICOM Secretariat and within the government sector. She informed that the NGO movement in the Caribbean spawned the work in this area and that commendation had to be given to women in the NGO movement. Whilst the relationship between the NGO sector and the government had not always been cooperative, the two sectors were able to work closely during the Beijing preparatory process to the extent that NGO representatives comprised part of government delegations at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Ms. Pollard emphasized the importance of strategy, collaboration and networking. She also stated that there was a need for a vision for the Caribbean subregion. In this regard, she highlighted the role of the Centre for Gender Studies of the University of the West Indies and encouraged it to continue working to provide the subregion with the strategic thinking needed by governments and the women's movement in the subregion.

Dr. Joycelin Massiah focused her presentation on the way forward, while commenting that there had been two major revolutions: globalization and changing gender ideologies and structures in the subregion. She reflected on the actual and potential impacts of the decline in the banana industry and on women in the Caribbean subregion. She pointed out that NGOs had a wealth of information on the social and economic effects of trade agreements and recommended that governments should form alliances with NGOs to assist in the alleviating the negative effects of these trade agreements.

Working groups session

Working groups were formed to discuss the three aspects of gender equity:

- (a) Poverty and the economy;
- (b) Gender equity: Women in power and decision-making and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; and
- (c) Human rights, peace and violence.

The comments and ideas from these groups were incorporated into the Port-of-Spain Consensus, which is attached as Annex I.

Upcoming activities in the review and appraisal process

The Eighth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America

Ms. Sonia Montano, Head of the Women and Development Unit, ECLAC Headquarters, informed the meeting that the aim of the eighth session of the regional conference was to review and assess the progress achieved in the region since the preceding session and the FWCW. At that meeting recommendations were to be presented on the expedited implementation of the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995-2001.

Ms. Montano reminded the meeting that the eighth session of the regional conference, to be held in Lima, Peru in February 2000, would constitute the preparatory regional meeting for the Special Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations entitled "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century".

The Commission on the Status of Women Meeting: March 2000

Ms. Magalys Arocha Dominguez of the Cuban delegation informed the meeting that the major share of the three-week forty-fourth session of the CSW in March 2000 would be allocated to the Commission acting as the Preparatory Committee for the Special session of the General Assembly entitled " Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century" to be held in New York in June 2000.

Closing

Ms. Sonia Montano addressed the meeting by way of closing remarks. She challenged the delegates to assume the work involved in reformulating macroeconomic policies recognising that certain economic frameworks might inhibit the advancement of women.

Dr. Len Ishmael thanked the delegates for attending the ministerial meeting and reminded the meeting of ECLAC's mandate in the subregion to provide technical assistance to governments, where needed.

Annex I

THE PORT OF SPAIN CONSENSUS
(adopted at the Third Caribbean Ministerial Conference on Women)

We, the Ministers with responsibility for Women's Affairs of the Caribbean and government representatives participating in the Third Caribbean Ministerial Conference on Women in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, reaffirm our commitment to the Regional Platform for Action, the Beijing Platform for Action and the subsequent regional plans, including the CARICOM Regional Plan of Action, which have emerged as part of the follow-up to the Fourth World conference on Women,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 52/231 to convene, from 5-9 June 2000, a Special Session to appraise and review the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action and to consider further actions and initiatives,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 52/231 which encourages regional preparatory activities for the Special Session by governments, in cooperation with the regional commissions, and recommends submission of the information on the implementation of the Platform for Action as an input to the Commission at its forty-fourth session in the year 2000,

Recognizing the importance of regional and subregional monitoring of the global and regional platforms for action such as will occur at the Eighth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean,

Reaffirming the Georgetown Consensus of the Second Ministerial Conference on Women which recognized the need for accelerating the pace of implementation, while affirming the spirit of collaboration with non-governmental organizations and cooperation among intergovernmental agencies, and made recommendations to advance the process towards the attainment of gender equality, social justice and development,

Agree to adopt and elaborate the following recommendations aimed at strengthening the process towards the attainment of gender equality, social justice and development in the region:

1. Accelerate action in promoting an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres through the implementation of:

- (a) Gender analysis and planning;
- (a) Gender management systems; and
- (c) Gender impact assessments

2. Implement those areas in the Platform for Action that address macroeconomic policies aimed at economic development by, inter alia:

- (a) Engaging in gender impact assessment of macroeconomic and budgetary policies;
- (b) Evaluating the adequacy of macroeconomic variables used to define poverty in the prevailing economic situation in each country, recognizing that emphasis on economic indicators may distort the measurement and understanding of poverty levels;
- (c) Applying data on female-headed households as part of macroeconomic policy formulation;
- (d) Engaging in economic literacy programmes for women;
- (e) Ensuring actions that target social and economic development of women (such as micro-enterprise training, agri-processing training and skills training), be complemented by adequate levels of support through the extension of credit facilities, technical assistance and marketing initiatives.
- (f) Ensuring the provision of adequate resources for effective programmes for the alleviation of poverty among women;
- (g) Influencing the employment creation strategies to ensure gender sensitivity.

3. Emphasize the need for a coherent, coordinated and participatory approach among all partners in development in the implementation of national poverty eradication plans and programmes, which fully take into account the gender perspective.

4. Consider and take account of negative economic effects created by globalization, loss of preferential access to markets and trade embargoes in policy formulation and national agreements, since these contribute to increasing levels of poverty and unemployment and to cultures of violence.

5. Consider the design of a pilot programme using a thematic entry to test the gender planning process. A suggested theme is “poverty eradication”, as it requires a multisectoral approach for solution and is thus relevant to the multisectoral nature of gender equity. It would also enhance the measurement of success of gender planning.

6. Call upon regional and international organizations to provide financial and technical resources to conduct research and undertake other initiatives focused on women and poverty in the Caribbean subregion, paying attention to, inter alia, women’s unwaged and low waged work.

7. Develop national implementation strategies or plans of action to address the implementation of the Platform for Action, bearing in mind that shifts in resource allocation at the national level may be necessary and that governmental access to financial and technical resources from international agencies may be determined by the existence of such plans.

8. Ensure collaboration among the national machineries for women and key sectoral ministries in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Copenhagen Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development.

9. Incorporate the gender perspective in environmental planning and ensure the inclusion of women in the decision-making process and in the assessment of the impact of natural disasters, consistent with women’s contribution to sustainable development through their participation in economic and social development processes and environmental protection.

10. Provide leadership management training and gender analysis for female parliamentarians and women in political parties, the public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations, local government and community groups.

11. Strengthen the national machineries for women through the following:

- (a) Training in collaboration with training institutions, universities and international agencies to ensure a comprehensive understanding of gender mainstreaming as a critical element in the achievement of gender equality, equity and social justice;
- (b) Provision of the necessary technical, material and financial resources to empower the national machineries for women to implement the various plans of action;
- (c) Minimizing the dislocation of the women's/gender bureaux and utilize the skills, experience and expertise of the technical officers with responsibility for women's/gender affairs; and
- (d) Adjusting the nomenclature of the government ministries with responsibility for women/gender affairs to fully reflect the inclusion or content of the portfolio;

12. Ensure that mechanisms are established to accelerate the achievement of gender equality in political participation and representation at all levels of the electoral process, in the composition of boards, commissions and other public appointments, and in the granting of national honours and awards. In so doing, ensure that there is no regression of advancements already made.

13. Promote research on "women and governance" through various agencies, institutions, including universities, to identify, inter alia, measures that would counter the underrepresentation of women in the electoral process and other areas of decision-making.

14. Promote biographical research on the recipients of CARICOM's triennial women's award.

15. Monitor the outcomes of education and training and systems of mentoring to facilitate women's greater access to decision-making.

16. Undertake further research and analysis on gender socialization practices and its impact on education choices and career options.

17. Develop gender sensitive teaching materials, classroom practices and curricula and regular gender training for teachers to eliminate gender stereotypes and to develop non-discriminatory education and training aimed at the physical and intellectual development of both girls and boys. Teacher training is an essential component in the transmittal of gender-sensitive programmes for eliminating the differential behavioural expectations of girls and boys that reinforce the division of labour by gender.

18. Research and disseminate findings on techniques for improving teachers' capabilities to deliver gender-sensitive instruction in order to support the development of multicultural, gender-sensitive curricula in all areas of instruction.

19. Support the establishment of a Caribbean education and research unit, which would be responsible for disseminating research findings within the region so that duplication and wastage would be avoided.

20. Research and address the root causes of violence against women recognizing that gender-based violence is of major concern in the region. In this regard, the following should be considered:

- (a) Policy and programmatic interventions should to be based on an understanding of the nature and types of violence against women and of how this violence in all its manifestations is constructed, perpetuated and reproduced. Gender-specific research and data collection is necessary, therefore, for a better understanding of the nature of violence against women;
- (b) Review policies concerning corporal punishment in schools and other institutions for children in light of States' obligations under the Convention of the Rights of the Child;
- (c) Examine and develop alternative and developmentally sound forms of discipline of children recognizing that corporal punishment, as a dominant means of discipline in schools and at home, is often abusive and may be one of the roots of violence against women;
- (d) Provide gender training to care givers of children, and particularly to teachers, to enhance an appreciation of their role in the socialisation of boys and girls, given that certain socialisation practices contribute to the perpetuation of gender violence; and

- (e) Study and address the construction of undesirable forms of masculinity and the ways in which violence against men and boys in, for example, educational and penal institutions contribute to such construction.

21. Take measures to prevent violence against women and children by promoting the adoption of protective legislation, where it does not already exist, and by emphasising the prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women.

22. Encourage non-partisan mechanisms and advocacy strategies to facilitate the ongoing review, monitoring and implementation of legislation to counteract and eradicate violence against women.

23. Encourage the provision of counseling services for both victims and the perpetrators of violence against women.

24. Develop appropriate training, advocacy and awareness programmes for judicial, legal, medical, social sector, educational, media and police personnel to sensitize them to the nature of gender-based acts and threats of violence, with a view to ensuring the effectiveness of legislation and the fair treatment of female victims.

25. Encourage governments to sign and/or ratify or accede to, as appropriate, all international human rights conventions and instruments relevant to the advancement and protection of women's rights and, thereafter, to implement the provisions of these human rights instruments;

26. Maintain and strengthen the process of review and reform of legislation and of administrative and bureaucratic practices to ensure full compliance with the relevant international human rights conventions, most particularly, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

27. Ensure the effective implementation of enacted legislation at national level, which eliminates direct as well as indirect forms of gender discrimination.

28. Develop and strengthen programmes aimed at ensuring women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, in keeping with decisions taken at the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women.

29. Investigate the utility of the retroviral agent in the treatment of pregnant women infected with the HIV virus and apply this treatment modality in the primary health care and safe motherhood practice, where appropriate.

30. Consider and address the issue of women's mental health in the context of, inter alia, domestic violence and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

31. Evaluate the impact of health sector reform and social policy reform on women's health and implement policy modifications as indicated by research findings.

32. Address the needs of older women through the development and maintenance of adequate pension schemes and create and develop relevant programmes aimed at ensuring the security and dignity of the older woman; and

33. Encourage collaboration among regional and international agencies through periodic meetings of agencies to facilitate cooperation with regard to funding and the sharing of programme plans.

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