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Platform for Action  
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**REPORT OF THE ECLAC/CDCC FOURTH CARIBBEAN MINISTERIAL  
CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE BEIJING  
PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

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## **REPORT OF THE ECLAC/CDCC FOURTH CARIBBEAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

The Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean and secretariat of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC) convened the Fourth Caribbean Ministerial Conference on Women: Review and Appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 12-13 February 2004, in collaboration with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Gender Equality Programme and the United Nations Development Fund For Women (UNIFEM) Caribbean Office.

The following CDCC member and associate member countries were present: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago. Turks and Caicos attended as observers. The following organizations participated: the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre/Pan American Health Organization (CAREC/PAHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNIFEM, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), CARICOM, the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), CIDA, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the University of the West Indies (UWI). Also present at the meeting were representatives from three Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and special invited guests. The list of participants of the meeting is attached as Annex II.

The meeting was structured around three development issues:

- (a) Poverty, economic autonomy and gender equity;
- (b) Empowerment and institutional building from a gender perspective; and
- (c) Health with a focus on sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS.

The first two themes were agreed at the Thirty-fifth Meeting of the Board of Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference of Women for Latin America and the Caribbean. The third was specific to the Caribbean subregion.

## **Agenda item 1: Opening of meeting**

### Meeting of heads of delegation

A meeting of heads of delegations was convened and elected the following persons to the Bureau of Presiding Officers:

Chairperson:	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Vice-Chairpersons:	Saint Lucia Trinidad and Tobago
Rapporteur:	Puerto Rico

It was agreed that should the need arise, the Chairperson would convene further meetings.

### Opening ceremony

Welcome remarks and addresses were delivered by His Excellency, The Honourable Selmon Walters, Minister of Social Development, Cooperatives, Gender, The Family and Ecclesiastical Affairs of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Mr. Daniel Blanchard, Secretary of the Commission; Ambassador Lolita Applewhite, Deputy Secretary-General, CARICOM Secretariat; Ms. Roberta Clarke, Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM Caribbean Office; Ms. Phyllis Roett, Senior Development Officer, Development Section, CIDA, Barbados and Ms. Tracey Robinson, Lecturer, Faculty of Law, University of the West Indies, Barbados. The feature address was delivered by Sir Vincent I. Beache, Acting Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, the Public Service and Airport Development.

Ms. Miriam Roache, Coordinator, Gender Affairs Division of the Ministry of Social Development, Cooperatives, Gender, The Family and Ecclesiastical Affairs, chaired the opening proceedings. She welcomed delegates to the conference and to St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The remarks and addresses provided a context for many of the issues to be considered by the meeting and the importance of gender equality to development was emphasized.

Honourable Selmon Walters welcomed delegates and other persons to St Vincent and the Grenadines. He reiterated his government's commitment to advancing the Beijing Platform for Action and asserted that the war on poverty in the Caribbean subregion could only be won with the full empowerment of its women.

Mr. Daniel Blanchard, Secretary of the Commission, welcomed delegates to the meeting and noted that the review of the Beijing Platform for Action formed part of the 10-year global review. He also pointed out that this meeting (as well as two other

subregional meetings in Mexico and Honduras) was preparatory to the Ninth Regional Conference on Women to be held in Mexico from 9-12 June 2004. In this context therefore, he urged delegates to use the opportunity to take stock of the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action and share best practices for success.

Mr. Blanchard also highlighted the importance of the conference themes to women in the subregion and alluded to their many gains in areas such as education and political decision-making, but noted that notwithstanding such gains, poverty among Caribbean women was continuing and seemingly intractable. He situated this continuing poverty in the context of women's responsibilities for social reproduction (cultural factors) and their relative lack of access to material and economic resources (structural factors) both of which were mutually reinforcing and rooted in gender inequality. With respect to HIV/AIDS, he stressed that the accelerating rate of HIV infection among women and girls in the subregion was of deep concern. Mr. Blanchard reiterated ECLAC's commitment to addressing the negative social and economic influences on gender equality and its support of the integration of women in the economic process of the Caribbean subregion.

Ambassador Lolita Applewhite, Deputy Secretary General, CARICOM, stated that the CARICOM Secretariat was pleased to have collaborated with ECLAC in the convening of this meeting. She pointed to new structures at the Secretariat which facilitated greater cross-sectoral collaboration and integration at the ministerial level but which at the same time minimized the opportunity for in-depth analysis at the sectoral level. The Secretariat therefore welcomed this opportunity for ministers with responsibility for women's and gender affairs to be able to review important issues affecting women in the subregion. In addition, with negotiations currently underway for the formation of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), the deliberations and outcome of the conference would be important to this process.

Ambassador Applewhite also noted the importance of gender equality as it related to poverty and the economy and sexual and reproductive health to the Caribbean community and introduced the document "Plan of Action to 2005: Framework for Mainstreaming Gender into key CARICOM Programmes". She referred to the book "Gender Equality in the Caribbean: Reality or Illusion", published by the CARICOM Secretariat as part of its activities for the five-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action, and noted the relevance of the conclusions of the chapter on poverty and the economy. These included:

(a) The sexual division of labour in CARICOM countries, at the core of which was the overwhelming responsibility that women and girls continued to have for caring labour, had changed very little;

(b) In economic terms, the gap between men and women was not narrowing (except in relation to participation in the labour force which was not a reliable indicator);

(c) The analysis being made and accepted by key institutions that gender was not a significant determinant of poverty was flawed; and

(d) The new export sectors, which preferred to rely on women's cheaper and relatively more compliant labour, used female labour against male labour while not increasing the access that poor women had to secure employment.

She reiterated the point that despite women's greater participation and improved performance in education, they remained outside of economic decision-making, continued to be clustered in the low-paid sectors of the labour market and consequently were excluded for the most part from the social dialogue on job and social security. She hoped that the deliberations of the meeting would provide the necessary tools for accelerating gender equality in the subregion.

Ms. Roberta Clarke, Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM Caribbean Office, applauded the achievements of the subregion's national machineries in incorporating gender analysis across the public sector. At the structural level there was improvement in the areas of analytical thinking, law reform, service delivery and, to some extent, gender budgeting. At the cultural level, advocacy about women's rights had revolutionized women's thinking on their entitlement to personal autonomy and freedom of choice, as was evident by their increased ambition for educational certification and achievement.

She pointed out that while in general the most direct and overt forms of discrimination against women had been eliminated from our laws and practices (the 'high state of politics'), it was in the 'deep politics of society' that the more subtle and intransigent forms of indirect discrimination shaped and constrained the lives of girls and women, and boys and men. Thus, notwithstanding women's educational achievements, they were still clustered in the sectors of the economy that were underpaid and undervalued; violence against women continued to curtail women's enjoyment of their human rights; unequal gender relations and acting out of stereotyped notions of masculinity were revealed in the changing dimensions of HIV/AIDS with devastating consequences for women's health, and women had made few strides in taking their equal place in positions of power and decision-making at all levels in our society.

Alongside these realities, Ms. Clarke cited the increasing concern in the subregion for boys: the ways in which gender intersected with other bases of difference such as class and race were creating a disadvantaged status for some boys in the subregion. She acknowledged the involvement of the national machineries in partnership with ministries of youth and education in facing this challenge, but stressed that this should not be at the expense of their commitment to women's empowerment. Instead, it should strengthen their resolve to confront inequalities in their respective societies.

In closing, Ms Clarke noted that meetings such as this provided an opportunity for Caribbean States to periodically renew their commitment to gender equality. The subregion could also demonstrate its commitment to international accountability around gender justice and to the reinforcement of the global consensus on women's rights by joining the international community in signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Women's Convention. Ms Clarke reaffirmed UNIFEM's support of women's empowerment in partnership with the governments of the subregion, the women's movement and the development agencies.

Ms. Phyllis Roett, Senior Development Officer, CIDA, stated that through its Gender Equality Programme, CIDA had reaffirmed its commitment to advancing gender equality in the Caribbean. She informed the gathering that each national gender equity fund focused on the country's needs and supported projects aimed at advancing gender equality. Ms. Roett noted that the wide gap between men and women as a result of gender discrimination constrained economic growth and progress in the Caribbean subregion and that CIDA was working towards decreasing poverty and gender disparities. The challenges to achieving gender equality included overcoming cultural differences, strengthening political will and commitment, mobilizing resources and building capacity, coping with ever-widening national mandates and developing precise definitions of terms such as marginalization and alienation. Citing research by Professor Barbara Bailey<sup>1</sup>, Ms. Roett urged the meeting to consider: (a) the extent to which education could be used to achieve equality between women and men; and (b) the extent to which access to education translated into equal opportunities for economic participation and equality between the sexes.

Sir Vincent I. Beache, Acting Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, the Public Service and Airport Development of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, delivered the feature address "Attaining gender equality and social justice in the Caribbean". He expressed his pleasure at the opportunity to collaborate with the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat, UNIFEM and CARICOM in working towards achieving the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action, and urged Caribbean countries to join forces to achieve these goals. He reaffirmed his country's commitment to the goals of gender equality and gender equity and to charting the way forward for the subregion. He stressed that the commonalities of the countries demanded continued collaboration as one force in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of reducing poverty and mainstreaming gender by 2020. He also reminded participants that as they deliberated on the problems facing the subregion, these remained the core issues facing the subregion. He acknowledged the value of women's contribution to the development process in St. Vincent and the Grenadines on the one hand, and the great disparity between the sexes on the other. He stressed the crucial role of education to economic progress in any country, and stated that gender equity forced governments to provide equal access to education and to pay special attention to all groups of boys and girls with disadvantaged access to education.

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Barbara Bailey is the Regional Coordinator, Centre for Gender and Development Studies, University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston, Jamaica.

He urged participants to make a conscious effort to influence Caribbean plans for gender equity by adopting the following guidelines:

- (a) Aggressive pursuit of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015;
- (b) Gender mainstreaming of all policies and programmes;
- (c) National commitment to spearheading gender mainstreaming initiatives;
- (d) Programmes to respond to emerging trends in gender inequities;
- (e) Analysis of developmental conclusions such as underachievement of boys in the education system;
- (f) Gender analysis of data to keep abreast of the status of the gender dimension in each sector; and
- (g) Conception of gender as an analytical tool to providing solutions to gender inequalities.

He concluded by expressing the hope that as a region, the commitments to the Beijing Platform for Action would be reaffirmed and that ministers would pledge greater support to gender mainstreaming efforts in an effort to improve the quality of life of women.

Ms. Tracey Robinson, Faculty of Law, University of the West Indies, gave the final address entitled "Culture, human rights, and gender justice in the Caribbean". Focusing on the question of justice, Ms. Robinson noted that issues of women and gender had become so shrouded in politics that those working to achieve gender equality and the advancement of women had to constantly justify their motives and efforts. She remained certain that the challenge to gender in the Caribbean was the question of justice. As evidenced by the existing statistical data, she concluded that women remained central to an agenda of gender justice for many of the same reasons as existed when the first bureaux of women's affairs were established. Gender analysis of statistical data also exposed the need for a broader agenda of gender justice, but with specific and legitimate focus on women as a special interest group that still faced pervasive and systemic disadvantage in the Caribbean today. Further, Ms. Robinson stated that the long-term goal was social transformation, and that the processes of gender analysis, gender mainstreaming and gender perspective should not be treated as ends in themselves but as facilitative processes suggestive of a broader social justice agenda to end all forms of oppression.

With respect to human rights, Ms. Robinson voiced the concern that some measure of equality might have been attained in form, though not in substance, and that the increasing resources channelled into gender issues might not be bearing fruit in



practical terms. The data continued to reflect disparities, inequalities and a lack of social, economic and political progress by women and other disadvantaged sectors of society. On the issue of the relationship between culture and human rights as a means of achieving gender justice, Ms. Robinson suggested that a useful agenda for gender justice had to start with an acceptance of how people saw themselves and their lives. Culture must be re-imagined and justice must be negotiated from within people's experiences of life and community, with the right questions asked to expose the varied sense of culture. Negotiators, for example, had to find ways of having conversations inside the church and not in opposition to it, and facilitating those who, from inside the community, resisted and dissented from cultural norms. Part of what made gender justice possible was the extent to which life within culture was recognized as including dissent and challenge, because work at the State level would not be effective if those who dissented from the culture were demonized or alienated. Ms. Robinson concluded by saying that the principle of gender justice lay in the improvement of life at the level of the most ordinary.

**Agenda item 2:  
Organization of work and adoption of the agenda**

The meeting, through its heads of delegations, adopted the agenda as presented and agreed to its schedule of work.

The agenda of the meeting was discussed and adopted as follows:

1. Opening of meeting
  - 1.1 Meeting of heads of delegation
  - 1.2 Opening ceremony
2. Organization of work and adoption of agenda
  - 2.1 Defining the objectives of the meeting (objectives, outputs, structure of the report and related aspects)
3. Institutional mechanisms and gender equality
  - 3.1 Changing gender relations: Public policy challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action
  - 3.2 Dismantling patriarchy: Public policy and gender transformation in the Caribbean
  - 3.3 Roundtable discussion

4. Women and poverty
  - 4.1 Eliminating poverty and achieving social justice in the Caribbean: The promise of gender analysis
  - 4.2 Roundtable discussion
5. Reproductive health and rights
  - 5.1 Reproductive health and rights: HIV/AIDS and gender equality
  - 5.2 Roundtable discussion
6. Supporting gender equity programming in the Caribbean: The role of the United Nations system and development agencies
7. Working groups on critical areas of concern
8. Reports on the upcoming activities in the review and appraisal process
  - 8.1 The Ninth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean
  - 8.2 The Commission on the Status of Women, March 2004.
  - 8.3 The Commonwealth Plan of Action
9. Other business
10. Presentation and adoption of Conclusions and Recommendations
11. Closure of meeting

### **Agenda item 3: Institutional mechanisms and gender equality**

The representative of Jamaica presented a paper entitled “*Changing Gender Relations: Public Policy Challenges and Opportunities for the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action*”, which reviewed the progress made by Caribbean States in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action, and specifically, evaluated the national women’s/gender machineries for carrying out this mandate. Focus was placed on good practices, positive actions, lessons learnt, obstacles and constraints and future actions.

The paper stated that the ideology and strategies encompassed in the Beijing Platform for Action were based on gender mainstreaming. Moreover, the Beijing Platform emphasized the need for political commitment, the involvement of civil society and the need for men to be integrally involved in changing the forces that have resulted in the lack of equality and equity in all societies, and further, that eradication of poverty was critical to women’s development.

In her review, the representative analyzed the CARICOM Post-Beijing Regional Plan of Action to the Year 2000 (CARICOM POA) and concluded that it presented a unified position on the issues affecting women of the subregion. Further, the CARICOM POA – drafted during the ideological shift from Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD) – served as a guide for the national machineries to refocus their agendas beyond projects to improve women’s conditions to strategic programmes and policies to change women’s status within the development framework. The shift was a work in progress and there needed to be a balance between projects and policy development if sustainable change in the status of men and women in the subregion was to be achieved.

With respect to the capacity of the national machineries to carry out the mandate of the Beijing Platform for Action, important positive shifts had occurred in the areas of institutional strengthening, physical facilities and office space. There was a heightened awareness among the machineries of the necessity to mainstream gender throughout the public sector, which was seen in initiatives such as the development of national gender policies, gender budgeting, and situational analyses of men and women to inform policies and programmes. This notwithstanding, many of the machineries continued to be marginalized, under funded and lacked the capacity to carry out the Beijing mandate. These findings were very similar to those of the CARICOM Regional Plan of Action to the Year 2000 at the five-year review stage. The paper noted that many public policy challenges remained and identified some of these as follows:

- (a) The ideological shift from WID to GAD and the related risk of political dissension and fragmentation;
- (b) The need to find creative strategies to mainstream gender as fundamental to planning and development;

- (c) Lack of adequate financial and other resources to carry out mandates;
- (d) Lack of political will and commitment from the highest levels of decision-makers and policy-makers;
- (e) The need for more autonomy to operate effectively and efficiently; and
- (f) The lack of adequate legal provisions to counteract violence against women and girls, and restricted access to the legal system by the poor.

The following recommendations with respect to the Way Forward for the National Machineries were offered:

- (a) Accelerate the process of legal reform;
- (b) Increased and effective collaborative efforts across all sectors of society including the family, religious faiths and all educational institutions;
- (c) Articulate new policies to guarantee gender equity and justice in the shift from Women in Development to Gender and Development;
- (d) More organized and strategic technical assistance/collaboration from funding and other agencies with the capacity for training in gender analysis, the gathering of disaggregated data and gender mainstreaming strategies;
- (e) More opportunities for national machineries to share best practices and for cross-border mentoring and internship; and
- (f) Stronger nationwide public education programmes (formal and informal) on the definition and role of gender socialization and the impact on national development.

Finally, the paper concluded that ministries responsible for gender/women's affairs should lobby their governments to make gender mainstreaming a priority and to hold all public sector managers responsible for ensuring that all plans and programmes were reflective of governments' commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action.

Dr. Linden Lewis, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Bucknell University, Pennsylvania then presented "*Dismantling Patriarchy: Public Policy and Gender Transformation in the Caribbean*", which highlighted emerging trends in the public policy discourses around boys, men and gender equality.

At the outset, Dr Lewis noted the many difficulties associated with the term 'patriarchy', but contended that the notion of gendered subordination remained constant in the meaning of the term and it was in this sense it had to be used to be able to understand its practice as broadly applying to men and women. He asserted that

patriarchy was about the subordination of women to the rule of men and therefore to the unequal access to power, privilege and valued resources but it was also fundamentally about how some men were able to use their institutional or economic power to subordinate other men of different social classes, races, ethnicities or sexual orientation. He noted patriarchy's connectivity to capital: it was patriarchy operating through capital that highlighted differences, undervalued the labour of women and opened up certain types of men and all women to economic and social exploitation.

He asserted that patriarchy was a powerfully embedded phenomenon in the Caribbean. However, starting from the premise that it was not absolute and was always being contested, he suggested ways of beginning a process of dismantling patriarchy in the Caribbean and reconstructing societies built on a broader understanding of the notions of equality, participation and democracy. He argued for a process of resocialisation where the approach had to be one of democratizing society in general and being sensitive to changes over the life cycle, itself necessitating different kinds of adjustment in the socialization process. He nevertheless alluded to the many challenges of such a project. He also argued for a project of gender transcendence – the forging of strategic alliances between men and women. These alliances could be forged with respect to sharing specific burdens and family responsibilities and also at the political level. It was important here that men did not become obstacles to change or be perceived as impediments to progress. Dr Lewis noted that in addition to the household, the workplace presented itself as an important site of patriarchal arrangements and there needed to be greater emphasis towards establishing a more democratic work environment. The absence of sexual harassment laws in the workplace in the majority of Caribbean countries was evidence of a lack of workplace democratization as sexual harassment represented the most egregious examples of subordination of women and marginalized men in the Caribbean. He made the case for a more proactive role of the trade unions in the workplace democratization process.

With respect to gender transformation and public policy, Dr Lewis noted that the trend was to analyze the impact of economic and other policies on women. He suggested that this analysis should be extended to include men, since it was men who continued to occupy all the important positions of power and decision-making in the Caribbean. The issue of whether men were equipped to function effectively in the global economy also needed attention. He felt that the role of men in development and global restructuring could no longer be assumed and must be clearly articulated along the lines of the public sector, the private sector and civil society.

In defining a role for the State in promoting gender transformation, one had to consider that the State itself was an entity long associated with patriarchal power and domination. One also had to address the question of how was the State to implement policies which were sensitive to the needs of men, without sacrificing the advancement of women or without diverting resources for the improvement of the status of women. Acknowledging that such decisions required careful thought and planning, Dr Lewis nevertheless proposed concrete ways of addressing the issue. Gender audits, he suggested, could serve to give a clear sense of the issue of gender equity within the

public sector. Further, the involvement of men in the process could have the advantage of reducing hostility to change, and a sense of ownership of the process could be created by training persons from within the sector to carry out the audits. Other ways in which the State could begin a process of gender transformation included the examination of bureaucratic inertia through gendered lens; addressing the fears of some young men who felt excluded from certain sectors; dealing with the question of child labour in the informal sector and adherence to core international labour standards. Dr Lewis pointed out that the failure to adhere to core labour standards in the context of ever-increasing forms of exploitation of both indigenous and transnational capital exacerbated already existing tensions between men and women in the society.

Given the historic nature of trade unions as advocates for justice, he felt that this institution should broaden its interest in and support of gender mainstreaming in the subregion as a way of effecting gender transformation in the workplace, without comprising its traditional mandate of improving the terms and conditions of work. He also saw an expanded role for trade union involvement in the informal sector and in unemployment issues, two areas that contributed to the vulnerability and exploitation of men and women. He noted that the economic standing of men was crucial to their being able to provide for their families, and in situations of poverty and unemployment men felt their masculinity threatened. Trade unions could therefore play a strategic role to motivate boys and men to become better trained and qualified to enable them to better compete for the available jobs, rather than engage in unproductive conflicts with women about their being replaced economically and socially.

Dr Lewis concluded by urging the subregion to act on new initiatives before the already strained social fabric of civil society moved into deeper crisis. Such initiatives should be tailored to suit the local and cultural context and environment of the Caribbean.

Following the two presentations, selected country reports were presented. The representative of Antigua and Barbuda made reference to the significant provisions in that country's Constitution which spoke to gender equality. The constitutional reform process also provided an opportunity to strengthen and review the commitment to women's rights. Antigua and Barbuda had also ratified international treaties on issues of women's rights and incorporated the principles and tenets of these into State law. To increase women's participation in power and decision-making, initiatives had been undertaken by the Directorate of Gender Affairs to educate and train women in the following areas: management skills; assertiveness and self esteem; political training; and business skills. The project *Women's Political Participation – Training in Governance and Democracy*, sponsored by the Organization of American States (OAS), was established to promote women's full and equal access to all areas of public life, particularly at the highest levels. It also addressed the issue of achieving gender balance in participation and representation within governmental decision-making bodies.

The representative of Belize provided a chronology of the activities undertaken by her government since 1979 in establishing a national mechanism to address issues related to women and gender and in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. She highlighted the numerous gains in the areas of legislative/policy reform. Gender mainstreaming strategies included the development of a national gender policy, gender budgeting initiatives and the multi-sectoral response to family violence. She noted that several factors contributed to the success experienced by the Women's Department, a key factor being the fact that the department had stayed in the same ministry since its inception, and moreover, the directorate remained unchanged despite changes of ministers and governments. Also crucial to the department's success was the willingness by ministers and NGOs to work together on women's/gender issues. To this end, a women's agenda was developed and included in the manifesto of the present government (1998-2003 and 2003-2008). She noted that despite these successes, the women's department still faced challenges with respect to carrying out the mandate of the Beijing Platform for Action. Some of the more critical challenges were the lack of adequate resources; the channelling of resources into other sectors; limited sex disaggregated data and gender analysis; limited monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; and the traditional societal stereotypes, attitudes and expectations.

The representative of Suriname reported that her country had had several battles in its efforts to cope with the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action, but was pleased to report that they had managed to stabilize the downward economic trends and looked forward to a future filled with possibilities for social and economic development. Government initiatives aimed at advancing gender equality included:

- (a) Increasing the number of women in decision-making positions in order to reflect the trend of higher numbers of female graduates from academic institutions;
- (b) Acknowledgement of the need to undertake specific efforts to create a 50-50 balance of men and women in ministerial and parliamentary compositions;
- (c) The appointment of a special committee on 'gender' legislation and the drafting of new laws to eradicate discrimination in the present laws;
- (d) The establishment of a process of deeper and wider collaboration with NGOs;
- (e) The production of a gender mainstreaming plan of action, with input from women's organizations, incorporated into the Integral Gender Action Plan 2000-2005;
- (f) The implementation of a gender management system - a network of coordinating units to fulfil the needs of and monitor the process of gender policy formulation;
- (g) Training courses and workshops for public servants in various ministries on gender awareness, gender analysis, networking and lobbying; and

(h) Training in gender analysis and policy and planning for government personnel appointed as gender focal points, policy staff and staff of the bureaux for statistics and demographical data.

A roundtable discussion followed the three country reports. Some of the key issues raised included the widening mandates and increased outputs of the national machineries in spite of their relatively low bureaucratic level; women's relative lack of participation in political decision-making; the absence of sexual harassment laws in many of the countries in the subregion; and the process of policy formulation.

The meeting agreed that the national machineries could not effectively carry out their mandates and until these machineries were given greater autonomy, increased resources and more status, their effect would be minimal. Some national machineries reported that they received valuable ministerial and governmental support but financial and human resource allocations were limited. The meeting acknowledged that economic growth could lead to institutional strengthening and capacity building within the machineries.

With regard to women's relative lack of participation at the parliamentary and other high-level political positions, the meeting reported that research had shown that the number of women in decision-making positions was lowest in the Caribbean subregion. While no legal barriers to women occupying decision-making positions existed, there were cultural impediments to their inclusion and, political parties did not operate in ways which encouraged their participation. The meeting agreed that it was important that women at the lower levels of political participation be empowered to make use of opportunities and to engage in issues related to their well-being. This could be achieved through training programmes designed to promote higher levels of representation. On the issue of building capacity of women in leadership and decision-making and transcending the political divide, delegates were referred to Information Paper 8, "Women in Power and Decision-Making" included in their handouts for the meeting.

On the issue of sexual harassment, ministers agreed that there was a need to review existing legislation and to consider the introduction of specific legislation on sexual harassment which made provision for civil rather than criminal remedies. This was viewed as a more constructive approach to dealing with both victims and offenders.

The need for understanding the process of policy formulation across all sectors was discussed and it was acknowledged that there was need for training in this area.



#### **Agenda item 4: Women and poverty**

The representative from the UNDP Guyana Office presented a paper entitled “*Achieving Social Justice in the Caribbean: The Promise of Gender Analysis*”.

This presentation examined, from a human development perspective, the extent to which gender analysis was a component of the Guyana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The paper assessed the impact of the PRSP on women’s and men’s capabilities, opportunities and empowerment and considered the extent to which the policies could be said to be ‘pro-poor’ and ‘pro-equality’. She suggested that her study revealed that gender was not mainstreamed adequately in the PRSP, thus resulting in a gender-blind set of strategies for poverty reduction. The situation resulted from inadequate data and weak technical capacity at the national level. In addition, the absence of sufficient consultation with women’s and/or men’s groups resulted in a weak and difficult PRSP strategy to implement.

She suggested that in Guyana, as in other developing countries, the efforts at global economic integration had differential impact on women and men. These differential impacts ought to be taken into account in the preparation of a PRSP. In spite of the constraints and challenges, the UNDP representative felt that the process had the potential to create positive transformation in the policy-making process through its call for dialogue and by the integration of gender analysis in several ways and at several levels.

She concluded by listing steps that could be taken to ensure gender mainstreaming in poverty assessments. Among these were:

- (a) Incorporating into situational analyses a framework for policy dialogue, programme identification and project design;
- (b) Regular consultations with women’s organizations and national or regional gender experts, and/or the appointment of specialized staff or advisors, as a way of guiding the preparation of programme documents and their implementation;
- (c) Steps to mainstream gender at the project identification and formulation stages;
- (d) In monitoring the implementation of projects, attention should be paid to empowerment, distribution of beneficiaries, participation in decision-making and perceptions by beneficiaries of change/impact in their well-being;
- (e) Establishment of a list of national gender experts on human-centred thematic issues; and

(f) Development of effective screening procedures to ensure the inclusion of gender equality, environmental and community-based issues in all programmes.

The ECLAC/CDCC secretariat then presented “Poverty in the Caribbean: A gender analysis”, which was presented by the representative from the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat, and was structured around four main areas: status of poverty assessment in the Caribbean; MDGs and gender; new policy directions that would strengthen gender equality; and recommendations for the way forward.

The paper noted that in the last 10 years the subregion had made much progress in the area of collection of data on poverty, referring to at least 15 countries in the subregion which had undertaken some form of a living conditions survey between 1994 and 2002. Most countries had one-off studies except in the case of Jamaica where continuous data had been collected annually since 1987. To illustrate the macroeconomic and social diversity of the subregion, a number of indicators that pointed to the high levels of GDP per capita income in many countries in the subregion were presented. Of the 23 countries examined, five had GDP per capita incomes of over US\$15,000; another five had per capita incomes of more than US\$8,000; and another six, had per capita incomes over US\$5,000. The remaining four, for which data was provided, had per capita incomes between US\$1,000 and US\$4,000. When examining the levels of poverty, the proportions of people living in poverty in the English-speaking Caribbean ranged from a low of 14% in Barbados, to a high of 39% in Dominica.

A look at other indicators suggested that inequality within countries was a persistent reality. Data pointed to what might be considered a medium to high gini coefficient, such as found in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada, and St. Kitts/Nevis of .56, .45 and .40, respectively. Such indicators could lead researchers to conclude that Caribbean societies were experiencing high levels of inequality.

Delegates were advised that in order to undertake a gender analysis of the existing data, they should consider questions such as the type of resources female-headed households had at their disposal; and the provisioning by the State to support female-headed households. Another question sought to understand how intra-household allocation of resources addressed the burden of care. Graphic illustrations of ‘income by headship’; ‘headship by level of education attained’; and ‘unemployment and highest level of education attained’ were used as examples of information that could be used to inform the assessment the situation of women in the economy. It was noted that more work was needed that would allow a comprehensive gender analysis of the existing poverty data to be undertaken and that the weakness of social statistics, generally, and administrative data, specifically, compounded the difficulties which researchers were experiencing in undertaking such studies.

In light of governments’ commitment to meeting the MDGs, the paper examined the extent to which the indicators used to measure the achievement of the MDGs were adequate to provide a gender analysis. It was concluded that work was needed to

increase the quality of the indicators now present in the MDGs in order to make them better reflect the differential position of women and men in regard to achieving the stated goals. In regard to new policy directions that would strengthen gender equality, three broad areas were posited: (a) strengthening initiatives that would lead to growth with equity; (b) ensuring education with equity for all; and (c) in regard to social protection, paying particular attention to female-headed households. In conclusion the following recommendations for the way forward:

- (a) More attention should be paid to women and the economy at the national, regional and global levels;
- (b) Policy-oriented research on the informal sector should be supported as significant proportions of women in the subregion earned their livelihoods through that sector;
- (c) Research on the wage gap between males and females was still required;
- (d) Research on risk reduction and mitigation from natural disasters with gender analysis was necessary for Caribbean SIDS;
- (e) Research on time use was necessary; and
- (f) Greater attention should be given to reducing social vulnerabilities of young women and men in the productive age groups from debilitating illnesses.

Following the delivery, three countries presented their country reports.

The representative of Cuba reported that the national machinery, the Federation of Cuban Women, although located within the executive power of the State, had gained very important experience working in cooperation with State organizations in such areas as the promotion of laws and policies towards women; the provision of gender training to ministries and institutions; and the monitoring and evaluation of laws and policies. One example of this was the adoption of the National Plan of Action following the Beijing conference on women. The ministries were responsible for the tasks, but the Federation was the theoretical and methodological focal point for the ministries in the execution and formulation of their activities. The Federation evaluated and followed up on this plan every two years.

The major priorities of Cuba's national machinery were: (a) employment; (b) legislation concerning the modification and reviewing of the Family Code; (c) new maternity laws; (d) education; (e) legislation on the Penal Code aimed at strengthening the penalties of criminal offenders and reviewing the crimes committed against women and girls; (f) promotion of women in decision-making positions.

There were still some obstacles in the way of advancement of women, related to stereotyping at all levels (societal, media, workplace and family), but the need to

improve the quality of life of women and presence of women were well recognized and supported by the government.

The representative of Dominica presented a brief critical analysis of the poverty assessment study which had been undertaken in his country and suggested that there had been insufficient incorporation of gender analysis in the study. He posited that although poverty assessments were relatively new to Dominica, such studies could benefit from a more holistic approach to assessing poverty. This was in keeping with experts' view of the need to broaden the vision of poverty assessment and sharpen instruments of measurement to better inform and influence gender-aware poverty interventions.

A lack of disaggregated household data in Dominica inhibited the mainstreaming of gender in the poverty assessment. This, in turn, inhibited gender analysis and created gaps in assessment, resulting in an inaccurate picture of poverty issues as they related to women and men. In spite of these limitations, the national machinery of Dominica had put in place several programmes, among them the Social Recovery Programme which benefited vulnerable groups, especially women; the Short-Term Employment Programme; the Credit and Education Facility Programme; the Dominica Social Investment Fund; and the Dominica Rural Enterprise Project, which made strict provisions for reducing poverty, especially among women.

Representatives of the subregion were urged to pool resources in order to break the vicious cycle of poverty in the Caribbean, and to find creative ways to resolve the crises before the social and economic ills facing the region escalated.

The representative of St. Kitts and Nevis stated that poverty reduction was identified as a priority for the government's gender development plan for 2000 – 2006, and that there were several initiatives underway in support of this commitment, for example, the School Feeding and Uniform Programme and assistance to indigent families. Also, in adhering to the commitment to the MDGs, the government had launched the National Human Development Agenda, an initiative which sought to reduce poverty by half by the year 2015. There were also other policy initiatives that targeted the reduction of poverty among women, such as the Teen Mother Policy and support for teen mothers to enable them to balance roles as students and mothers while completing their education. There was also entrepreneurship training for rural women aimed at enhancing their job market entry capacity, and parenting and self esteem training. The Government of St Kitts and Nevis was committed to ensuring gender equality and the full participation by women in all sectors of society.

Following the three country reports, delegates participated in a roundtable discussion. Regarding women and poverty, it was agreed that throughout the region the burden of child rearing fell on women and that limited resources were available to support women in this regard, which was why women were more affected by poverty than men. In this regard, regional efforts aimed at family law review with particular reference to child rearing and maintenance was urged. A different view of the issue

centred on the evidence suggested by the statistical data. The data did not support the existence of more poor women than men. Nevertheless, the data suggested that female-headed households comprised a higher proportion among the poor than male-headed households. Single-headed households among the aged also represented a greater proportion of the poor than any kinds of households. This evidence pointed to the need to carefully examine the data, bringing to bear all research in the area of poverty and gender in the subregion. Participants also urged greater focus on the use of qualitative data in future poverty assessment projects.

Building on experiences in this area of women and poverty, the draft ECLAC paper “Roads and short cuts towards gender equity in Latin America and the Caribbean” was cited and the need for the implementation of new policies that adequately covered the needs of women and children was stressed. Delegates, while praising the achievements made in the provisions of free antenatal clinics, expressed their support for the need for free access to other health services such as cervical cancer checks and mammograms, especially for women with children. The issue of poverty in the Caribbean as it related to globalization was discussed, with its associated problems of threats by information technology to job capacity; subsidies in the agricultural sector; the threat to the manufacturing sector by China’s dominance; problems in the services sector; and the threat to the labour force in the petrochemical sector by information technology in the developed world. These issues forced the subregion to consider issues as the exact causes of poverty, the gender face of poverty, the poverty cycle as it related to female-headed households, and the vicious cycle of teenage pregnancy. The potential threat to the entire workforce needed to be addressed.

The representative of the UNDP Barbados office outlined the findings of research done in the area of poverty and the MDGs, and listed the main challenges faced in each of the eight goals. She suggested that with respect to poverty and hunger, there was a need to upgrade human capital, especially for the poor; maintain sufficient economic growth to reduce poverty; and develop new industries to replace declining ones and to deal with the loss of protected markets.

She reiterated UNDP’s commitment to support countries in poverty eradication strategies, particularly in strengthening national capacity to collect and analyze data for poverty assessments. She suggested that there should be a wider Caribbean programme, however, and the hope was expressed for future collaboration with CARICOM, OECS, ECLAC and all Caribbean countries to achieve this.

Delegates then spoke to the link between poverty, economic decline and gender-based violence. It was suggested that the decreasing job opportunities for men could result in violence against women and children. The meeting recommended the introduction of legislative reforms to increase child maintenance, among other strategies. The provision of skills training for women in non-traditional areas (for example in tiling and plumbing), was cited as action that could assist to open up the job market and to buffer against the effects of gender-based violence.

It was posited that the issue of job scarcity was in fact a spin-off from the effects of globalization, and that training for women ought not to be created in a vacuum but in the context of opportunity for economic growth. In this regard, it was felt that training must be associated with job creation bearing in mind the potential for women to secure these jobs. The heart of the issue lay in women utilizing their power effectively by creating and supporting opportunities that were sustainable for them. Delegates recommended that those ministers of governments with responsibility for women and gender equality ought to collaborate regularly to advance the programme of action for gender equality.

### **Agenda item 5: Reproductive health and rights: HIV/AIDS**

The ECLAC/CDCC secretariat presented the document “*Reproductive Health and Rights: HIV/AIDS and Gender Equality*”.

The centrality of gender to the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean was explored. The paper specifically examined how unequal gender relations impacted on women’s access to their sexual and reproductive rights and how this in turn increased women’s vulnerability to HIV infection. It was noted that despite the implementation of various policies and programmes in the subregion, the epidemic was still a growing one. Differential rates and patterns of infection between men and women were also being observed. The number of men living with HIV/AIDS in the subregion was still higher than females, but accelerating rates of infection were being observed among women. Patterns of infection across the subregion also indicated that females in the younger age groups (15-19 and 20-24) were at greater risk of infection compared to males in the same age groups.

In attempting to explain the current patterns of HIV infection among females, the ECLAC/CDCC representative asserted that despite international human rights guarantees to their sexual and reproductive rights, the reality was that women lacked autonomy to make decisions about their own bodies, their sexuality and their fertility, including the right to a safe sex life. These rights had been appropriated by the State, by religion and by other powerful societal forces. A striking example of the State’s appropriation of these rights was to be found in the law. In the English-speaking Caribbean countries, a husband’s proprietary right to his wife’s body was protected in law. A wife could not, in law, refuse sexual intercourse. The corollary to this was a husband’s immunity from prosecution for marital rape, which was still applicable in some countries. The law therefore perpetuated the notion of a husband’s proprietary right to his wife’s body and reinforced dominant versions of masculinity and heterosexual power relations within the family, whereby it was the male who took responsibility for reproductive and sexual decision-making. The ideology of male authority was pervasive, rooted in unequal gender relations, and extended to all forms of relationships which involved commitment. There was evidence to support the contention that challenges to such male authority could lead to violence against women.

Within marriage therefore, as in other committed relationships, women lacked autonomy over their own bodies and had little power to negotiate around issues of sexual and reproductive health, including safe sex.

Male sexual authority and HIV transmission risks to women had to be viewed in the context of how masculinities and femininities were constructed around sexuality. On the one hand women were socialized to be monogamous while on the other, definitions of masculinity in the Caribbean privileged men through valuing male sexual prowess such as having multiple partners and maintaining a sexual relationship with a woman outside marriage, although some men might reject this ideology. Protected sex was not part of this construct. Globally, evidence was emerging that many women were becoming infected through their husbands and long-term partners.

She further contended that women's ability to insist upon safe sex practices was made all the more difficult because of certain concepts upon which marriage, as we know it in the Caribbean, was predicated: concepts of monogamy and procreation. In this context, protected sex was not a frequent practice within marriage. Sex within marriage was also deemed safe whether or not this was in fact the case. The conflict between male socialization practices as they pertained to male sexual behaviour and the concept of monogamy within marriage was evident. As such, extra-marital affairs were usually shrouded in secrecy and the charade of safe sex continued within the marriage. She argued that this ideology prevailed to other forms of conjugal unions in the Caribbean.

Violence against women also directly and indirectly curtailed women's access to their sexual and reproductive rights. Women's power to negotiate around issues of their sexual and reproductive health was even further diminished in situations of domestic violence. Sexual violence also directly increased transmission risks for both women and girls. It was noted that gender violence was itself a manifestation of gender inequality and in policies dealing with HIV/AIDS the view had to be taken that all manifestations of gender inequality were organically linked. The underlying structures that perpetuated gender inequalities therefore had to be addressed.

Economic vulnerability also increased transmission risks for women. In situations of economic dependence, women were less likely to negotiate safer sex or to terminate relationships which placed them at the risk of HIV infection. Poverty and lack of employment opportunities also forced some women and girls to resort to direct and indirect sex work as a survival strategy. Transactional sex between young girls and older men, which placed young girls at risk, suggested early internalization of the male provider role. The issue of childbearing as a cultural expectation, serial relationships, and teenage pregnancy were also raised.

The ECLAC/CDCC representative noted that the HIV/AIDS epidemic had become part of the development discourse and one outcome of this was the necessity for a closer examination of poverty, income distribution, social, political and economic exclusion and generally all forms of discrimination. Central to these issues and to the

HIV/AIDS epidemic was the issue of gender. Nevertheless, gender was not central to HIV/AIDS policies and plans at the national level. Some directions for future policy planning were given as follows:

- (a) Gender must be seen as central to planning and development and women's economic empowerment was critical in this regard;
- (b) There was a need to mainstream gender in all HIV/AIDS policies and programmes and across all sectors;
- (c) Gender training at all levels of the public and private sectors needed to be undertaken, with an expanded role for the trade unions, in this regard;
- (d) Critical analysis of past and present responses to achieving gender equality and equity with the aim of changing the deeply entrenched patriarchal culture of the subregion was needed; and
- (e) Gender analysis of regional and national plans of actions, policies and programmes for addressing HIV/AIDS was necessary.

The presentation was followed by selected country reports and a report from UNAIDS.

The representative of the Bahamas outlined the major challenges faced with respect to HIV/AIDS. These included:

- (a) The centralization of HIV/AIDS care delivery in the public hospital in Nassau;
- (b) Access to various target groups was challenging due to the archipelagic nature of the country;
- (c) Difficulty in replicating reproductive health services on each of the islands – such services are available to all government health services free of charge.
- (d) Existence of a closed society culture regarding the discussion of sex and related topics; and
- (e) Exposure of young girls to infection linked to materialism.

Best practices were identified as follows:

- (a) The Vertical Transmission Programme, whereby all who attended an STD clinic or a community clinic for an STD, or belonged to the antenatal clinic, were offered HIV testing. There was a protocol in place for all HIV positive pregnant women to receive free medication during pregnancy, and to the infant for the first six weeks of life.



As a result of this the vertical transmission rate saw a 10-fold decrease. This therapy was now offered to all persons with HIV;

(b) Initiatives undertaken through the Focus on Youth Programme, an STI/HIV/AIDS teen pregnancy prevention programme with emphasis on building self-esteem, confidence and negotiating skills;

(c) The PACE programme for pregnant teens;

(d) The conduct of a UNIFEM/UNAIDS project entitled “Gender Focused Interventions to address the challenges of HIV/AIDS”; and

(e) Sensitization and advocacy workshops and community-based research, focusing on the three Bahamian islands with the highest prevalence rate.

The representative of the British Virgin Islands (BVI) reported that discourses on topics such as HIV/AIDS and gender equality drew limited public debate. She noted that the heavy reliance on tourism, and a large migrant workforce especially in hotel housekeeping and in the construction subsector heightened the possibility of exposure to HIV/AIDS. The BVI’s National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS focused on prevention, education and treatment. A men’s group, “Brothers for a Better BVI” headed by the National AIDS Programme Coordinator was dealing with gender issues related to HIV/AIDS - 55 men attended the last forum hosted by the group. The Office of Gender Affairs, relevant government departments and NGOs were collaborating to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and gender inequality issues.

The representative of Haiti reported on her country’s developments in the area of research, State responses to HIV/AIDS, and gender-related strategies for development. She stated that the right to health care was enshrined in the constitution of the country, but that the political instability of Haiti prevented much focus on HIV/AIDS issues. There was a high child mortality rate. There was also a high rate of HIV births, perpetuated mainly by socio-cultural factors and cultural acceptance of male superiority and bigamy. Women’s lack of ability to negotiate their sexual health also contributed to these problems. Nevertheless, national sectoral strategies and ministerial plans to deal with HIV/AIDS existed and involved a multisectoral approach. Government had also launched a sensitization programme and a coordination unit to address HIV/AIDS issues. Sexual health education was underway in the school system through initiatives by the Ministry of Youth and Sport. There have also been collaborative partnerships between the public and private sectors. A Ministry of Health programme for preventing mother to child transmission had produced good results.

Social mobilization campaigns against HIV/AIDS received collaboration from all actors, and a system of volunteers had been set up to assist women. Peer educators received training on the feminization of AIDS, and there was a prevention and management programme in place. The importance of gender-related strategies for women’s organizations that proposed continued education for youths with respect to

reproductive health and sexuality was stressed. In addition to training there were also activities that generated income for women, and it was felt that this could positively address the feminization of AIDS. Threats faced in strategizing for gender included social, political and economic instability that caused crises in the various ministries; lack of human and financial resources; emigration from Haiti; lack of systematic research to address women and their health; rape legislation had yet to be formulated.

The representative from UNAIDS focused on a number of issues surrounding HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean. She spoke to the powerlessness of women to negotiate safe sex practices, the biological vulnerability of young girls and the stigma and discrimination faced as a result of HIV infection. There was also the potential for physical violence towards women and they were blamed for destroying their families. Participants were urged to consider in their development planning, the dropout rate of girls as a result of HIV infection and the impact on family life.

She noted that the HIV/AIDS epidemic could not be adequately addressed without mainstreaming gender issues into related programmes, policies and goals and suggested the need for advocacy in order to generate the social transformation required. By extension, providing information and communication about the epidemic could serve to empower leaders at all levels to address issues of sexuality. The importance of centrally incorporating gender needs into the development and planning process and mainstreaming gender in HIV national strategic plans and poverty reduction strategies was emphasized. Developing the legislative framework to deal with the stigma and discrimination was also important.

There was also the challenge of building partnerships with civil society (church, family and media). Their participation in social dialogue on issues surrounding HIV/AIDS was important to advancing the social transformation process. Equally important was the opportunity for victims and others directly affected by the epidemic to have their voices heard and their needs factored into policies and strategies. Dissemination of best practices of gender-responsive treatments and programmes was also facilitated.

The UNAIDS representative stated that effective monitoring and evaluation of the MDGs was needed to create a blueprint for future action. In this regard, UNAIDS played an important role in building national capacity to monitor targets and report on progress. The need to ensure that gender was incorporated into the evaluation process was stressed. Finally, with respect to resource mobilization and access, it was acknowledged that ongoing financial support was needed in the Caribbean subregion to ensure that gender was incorporated into national programmes. The need to monitor resource flows to ensure that money was spent exactly where it was needed was therefore highlighted.

A roundtable discussion followed the presentation of the reports. The issue of migration and its links to HIV/AIDS from a gender perspective was raised as an important issue affecting the subregion. It was seen as a serious problem for the non-independent territories of the subregion, especially with the thrust towards the CSME.

Migrant sex workers and sex trafficking of women and girls and the risks this posed for increased transmission were identified as major challenges. In this context, extramarital affairs also posed a threat to family life. Migration also had implications for the human rights of migrant workers, the rights of the child, poverty assessments, domestic violence and family life in general. It was important for the Caribbean to work together on this problem both at the developmental and structural levels. Delegates also agreed to work towards increasing the political will of their respective governments to provide more constructive coping strategies for people diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

The meeting also recommended the introduction of legal reforms to criminalize wilful acts of sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS to assist in stemming the increasing infection rates and to provide vulnerable groups, especially women and girls, an opportunity to seek legal redress. The child sex trade and incest were also implicated in the spread of HIV/AIDS and warranted serious attention from a legal and educational perspective. There was a need for HIV/AIDS education, which should encompass family life and health education to start as early as possible within the education system.

The meeting agreed that resocializing men and boys to deal with their relationships with women and to deal with their own responsibilities remained a major challenge. It was agreed that cultural stereotypes surrounding the notion of a woman's worth must be addressed in order to guide policy development and economic planning. The need to examine and find strategies to address the socioeconomic implications of illicit sexual behaviour was also addressed. One such strategy was continued funding of short-term solutions while keeping in sight the goal of long-term social transformation. Agency collaboration was seen as important to these efforts. The meeting also acknowledged that stigma and discrimination were important factors driving the epidemic and needed to be addressed urgently.

Gender budgeting as a strategy to deal with gender inequality issues, including HIV/AIDS, was seen as important. There needed to be greater focus on revenue as opposed to expenditure in order to provide a clearer picture of women's informal contribution to the economy. The need for smaller projects for women concurrent with larger projects associated with development must also be taken into account.

In all areas there was a call for government/ministerial intervention to deal with the phenomenon of HIV/AIDS.

**Agenda item 6:  
Supporting gender equity programming in the Caribbean:  
The role of the United Nations system and development agencies**

Presentations were made by the Commonwealth Secretariat, CIDA and the UNFPA.

The representative of Jamaica provided the context for the panel presentations. She stated that national machineries were not as involved as they should be in bi- and

multilateral arrangements by governments even though the machineries were uniquely positioned to be a driving force for effecting change. On the other hand, it was argued that the donor agencies needed to be engaged in active collaboration with the machineries since they were often not privy to current information regarding new research undertakings being funded or new avenues of financial resources at their disposal. National machineries also needed greater capacity to access funds in the short term in order to carry out the research needed to really make a difference in people's lives. In this regard, the donor agencies were urged to be more flexible in meeting the requests from the machineries for financial support, and in their definition of the types of projects that they deemed necessary or deserving of funding. The key was in creative thinking and collaboration in order to effect change and progress.

The representative of the CIDA contended that the larger issue was in finding ways to respond as a subregion and as governments to the global economic arrangements impacting on the people of the Caribbean. The specific challenges included: redefining development thrusts and issues; tackling institutional challenges and human resource challenges; and developing effective legal and policy frameworks. An important issue was the capacity of the national machineries to respond to a larger agenda, and to coordinate their efforts to assume the roles required of them by their governments. Since they had the power and skills to fulfil the requests, the bureaux should then build synergies that would require and receive political support. In so doing, the policies and programmes outlined in their plans of action would encourage governmental sectoral strategies aimed at serving the society. She noted that many United Nations agencies carried out mandates which required governments to report on their activities, and the national machineries were urged to find ways of contributing to such an agenda. They needed to build synergies at the national level to do the kind of reporting necessary.

The representative of UNFPA highlighted the need for social transformation and the ways in which this could be supported. She stated that in order to be sustainable, the subregion needed to support the social transformation agenda by integrating the various programmes of action and managing the data in a more sustainable way. She noted that at the institutional level, the agencies held a considerable measure of political leverage, enabling them to manoeuvre strategically on a global advocacy scale.

She suggested that national machineries needed to improve policy coherence by adhering to the provisions committed to and this entailed greater collaboration with the funding agencies. The agencies, she said, were mandated to insist on accountability by the machineries and to encourage them to mobilize resources to ensure that commitments were delivered. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that a lot of work was needed to maximize the resources in a more strategic and productive manner to ensure gender sensitivity of national and regional policies and programmes. There was a need to ensure that at the national level policies and programmes were based on basic human rights. Policies at the sectoral level also needed to be engendered.

It was felt that educating the youth about gender sensitive issues and concepts through the CXC and CAPE examinations would auger well in the long-term for advancing the gender agenda and effecting the social transformation necessary for improved living.

The way forward lay in: (a) political parties, trade unions and the private sector to incorporate in their agenda and programmes of action all the issues raised herein; (b) civil society strengthening their institutional capacity; and (c) sector reform to modernize programmes and engender health, education and legislation. These were the best practices in developing national gender policies, along with regional support of the CARICOM programme of action. Of critical importance to these was the issue of data collection. While the subregion was rich in data, there was not enough sharing of these data, and therefore no capacity building in analysis or in the collection of disaggregated data to inform policy development and planning. There must be information sharing on effective mechanisms to implement strategy, to translate policy into practice and to mainstream gender in practical ways.

The representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat congratulated participants on their intense collaborative efforts in the gender mainstreaming process and in assessing progress made in the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action. She stated that the implementation of these commitments was an unfinished process, regionally and globally, but no effort should be spared in seeing them come to fruition. Several areas for reflection were proposed:

- (a) The need for strengthened coordination of the United Nations agencies;
- (b) The need to develop and strengthen mobilization and harnessing of the United Nations agencies in the subregion. UNIFEM and the ECLAC/CDCC secretariat could take a lead role, in this regard;
- (c) The translation of agencies' agenda policies into practical accomplishments;
- (d) The fact that agencies had finite resources and the implications of this for regional development;
- (e) The need to take on macro-policy in order to seriously tackle gender issues.
- (f) The flexibility needed to address new challenges in the subregion (the challenge of democracy); and
- (g) The process of re-imagining Caribbean societies and determining future directions for growth, advancement and development.

The participants thanked the panelists for summarizing so clearly the concerns and ideas which were deliberated upon over the last two days, and pledged their continued support for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action throughout the subregion. The agencies also reaffirmed their commitment to contributing to social justice and gender equality in the Caribbean subregion but contended that this work was not simple and the environment for funding was now more hostile than it was a decade ago. Efforts had been undertaken to improve the social sector on a national level but these efforts were being undermined by eroding economic and social conditions. This challenge to the negotiating process was a major struggle faced by the donor agencies, and they urged the heads of the national machineries to find more creative avenues within which inroads could be made. At the subregional level it was difficult for the donor to make an impact, especially with fewer resources in some cases, so creative collaboration with the bureaux was seen as a way to overcome this difficulty.

In this regard, participants' attention was drawn to some of the avenues within the ECLAC system through which support could be garnered by Caribbean countries: regional conferences on women; regional bureaux as collaborators; statistical bureaux as data providers; inter-agency network for gender and equality; and tools for translation. Ministers and representatives of the national machineries were advised to work closely with their Ministries of Foreign Affairs to facilitate gender mainstreaming.

In the context of how gender projects were funded, it was felt that any project associated with 'development' was considered to be dealing with economic development, and commanded the attention of funding organizations; gender development, on the other hand, was a wide-ranging, long-term socio-cultural project that encountered difficulty in securing funding. The need for flexibility on the part of the donor agencies to accept gender development projects as equally viable and valid as economic projects was articulated. The development of tools for gender analysis, such as training modules, was seen as an aspect of the gender management system ideal for countries needing assistance in any stage of gender development. These tools ought to be accessible to anyone in the subregion desirous of them, and the national machineries should avail themselves of these materials and use them as they were intended.

Proposals were made concerning devising strategies for the dissemination of information and outcomes of gender dialogue generated in the various regional and global meetings and conferences. In order for the national machineries to have access to such information it was suggested that UNIFEM create an inter-agency webpage on which manuals, training materials and other useful and relevant documents could be posted. There could also be virtual consultations and cross-language exchanges via a chat room service.

**Agenda item 7:  
Working groups on critical areas of concern**

Delegations were divided into three working groups to identify the way forward for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The thematic areas for the working groups were: (a) Women, the economy and poverty; (b) Reproductive health with particular reference to HIV/AIDS; and (c) Strengthening institutional mechanisms. The recommendations were then presented to the meeting and a plenary discussion followed. The recommendations were incorporated into the “*Kingstown Way Forward: Recommendations and Conclusions*” attached as Annex I.

**Agenda item 8:  
Reports on the upcoming activities in the  
review and appraisal process**

The representative of ECLAC, Santiago, Chile, spoke to the preliminary working paper: *Roads and short cuts towards gender equity in Latin America and the Caribbean*, prepared for the ninth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean to be held in Mexico on 10-12 June 2004. The paper had been distributed to delegates for their comments and input. She stated that this document coincided with proposals and suggestions put forward in this meeting, and that it was opportune for these issues to be highlighted at the conference in Mexico. Also, the document attempted to provide a set of empirical indicators for quantitative analysis. Qualitative analysis was still needed for the final version of the document. The Regional Conference, a subsidiary body of ECLAC, was mandated to report on the subregion’s progress in achieving the MDGs and implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. Another document circulated gave details about the Regional Conference, the sessions held and the work undertaken in the fulfilment of its mandates. An invitation was extended to all delegates present to attend the ninth session in Mexico.

The representative from the Commonwealth Secretariat offered her document, *The Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Equity 2005-2015*, as a guide for Caribbean gender mainstreaming in all its forms and through all its stages. She stated that this document would be fine-tuned before being officially presented at a meeting in Fiji in June, and encouraged the delegates to voice their comments, suggestions, criticisms and concerns since it was expected to form part of the Beijing+10 Global Review.

**Agenda item 9:  
Other business**

(a) A suggestion was made to adopt as the theme song for all CARICOM meetings one of the calypsos sung during the opening ceremony of this conference;

(b) The delegates were commended for the high level of dialogue which took place during the conference, and a call was made to become more involved in the ECLAC/CDCC work on governance and equity; and

(c) The delegate from Cuba presented on her country's efforts at controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS.

**Agenda item 10:  
Presentation and adoption of conclusions and recommendations**

The meeting considered provisional draft recommendations and conclusions submitted by the drafting committee which comprised:

- |                                   |                    |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| (a) Anguilla                      | (b) Bahamas        |
| (c) Cuba                          | (d) Dominica       |
| (e) Puerto Rico                   | (f) St Kitts/Nevis |
| (g) St Vincent and the Grenadines |                    |

Following the deliberations and proposals of the delegates, the final document "*The Kingstown Way Forward: Recommendations and Conclusions*" was agreed upon unanimously. The document is attached as Annex I.

**Agenda item 11:  
Closure of Meeting**

Honourable Selmon Walters delivered the closing remarks. He expressed his gratitude that his country had been given the opportunity to host the meeting. He thanked delegates for engaging in such elaborate and fruitful discussions and concluded by challenging delegates to follow through on old and new commitments made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The meeting ended with the usual exchange of courtesies.



Annex I**THE FOURTH CARIBBEAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN  
KINGSTOWN, ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES  
12-13 FEBRUARY 2004****The Kingstown Way Forward:  
Recommendations and Conclusions**

In 1995, 189 countries met in Beijing, China at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women and agreed on the 12 critical areas of concern. These were: Women and poverty, Education and training for women, Women and health, Violence against women, Women and armed conflict, Women and the economy, Women in power and decision-making, Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, Human rights of women, Women and the media, Women and the environment and the Girl child.

After a five year period, Governments undertook what was called a mid-term review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. In October 1999, Governments of the Caribbean met at the Third Caribbean Ministerial Conference on Women, in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The Conference was the result of a review process undertaken at the national level and which formed one component of a global review that would culminate in a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly convened in June 2000 on the theme: "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century". In that mid-term review it was ascertained that governments had sought to achieve higher measures of social stability, integration and gender equity. Commitments had been made during the period under review to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and to strengthen the protection of human rights. Legislation to address domestic violence was passed across the subregion and had fundamental and significant impact. In regard to the national machineries for women, they were generally assessed as being stronger technically with improved levels of resources. They also seemed to be less isolated from national development planning. Despite 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.

The Caribbean, in their review process had prioritized the following five critical areas of concern:

1. Poverty and the economy;
2. Inequality in health care and related services;
3. All forms of violence against women;

4. Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making; and
5. The girl child.

At this, the Fourth Caribbean Ministerial Conference on Women, in Kingstown, St Vincent and the Grenadines, governments are once again meeting to review and assess their achievements in implementing the Platform for Action, the challenges affecting full implementation and the future actions necessary to overcome the obstacles and to advance the full and accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action.

We, the Ministers with responsibility for Women's Affairs of the Caribbean and government representatives participating in the Fourth Caribbean Ministerial Conference on Women in Kingstown, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 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 to 2005, which have emerged as part of the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women,

Welcome the preliminary version of the document prepared by the ECLAC secretariat entitled: Road and short cuts towards gender equity in Latin America and the Caribbean,

Reiterate the relevance of the thematic areas and of the progress of work for the ninth session of the Regional Conference and its planned organization,

Entrust the ECLAC secretariat with the task of supplementing and enriching the above-mentioned document for presentation at the Ninth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean based on the main points of agreement which emerged during this subregional meeting, with regard to the following issues: economic policies and women and poverty; reproductive health and rights of women, strengthening institutional mechanisms, all within the framework of gender mainstreaming,

Bear in mind the upcoming Ninth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean to be held in Mexico, 9-12 June 2004,

Recognize the importance of regional and subregional monitoring of the global and regional platforms for action, and the need for full participation in the processes of the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, in particular, the Commission on the Status of Women,

Reaffirm the outcome of the second and third Caribbean Conferences on Women which recognized the need for accelerating the pace of implementation of the Beijing

Platform for Action, while affirming the spirit of collaboration with non-governmental organizations and cooperation between intergovernmental agencies, and making 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 subregion with particular reference to:

## **1. Women, the Economy and Poverty**

- (a) Accelerate action in promoting an active and visible policy to address the gender dimensions of poverty reduction and women's place in the economy in the context of the impact of globalization on Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS);
- (b) Ensure that measures to increase competitiveness and productivity reflect the concerns for job creation for women; the need for safeguarding women in the flexibilisation of labour; the facilitation of sustainable livelihoods; protection and support for women working in the informal sector particularly with regard to care services for children and the elderly; the sexual harassment of women; and the roles and responsibilities of men and women in reproductive work,
- (c) Review and examine the policies and laws in order to enhance provisions for child support and maintenance in so far as the vulnerability of women and the households that they head is integrally linked to women's disproportionate responsibility for child care in all its dimensions;
- (d) Strengthen the gender framework (including time use surveys) within the methodology for poverty assessment in the subregion in order to capture the differential impact of poverty on women and men;
- (e) Address discrimination in all its forms including race and class in order to advance the well being of poor women;
- (f) Strengthen policies which take into account the rapid pace of globalization and the resultant displacement of women seeking better working conditions outside of their home environment; and
- (g) Continue to collect and examine data on women's and men's unwaged work as a contribution to the domestic economy;

## **2. Reproductive Health with particular reference to HIV/AIDS**

- (a) Undertake legal reform to safeguard the rights of women infected with HIV/AIDS;
- (b) Strengthen advocacy in order to achieve responsible sexual behaviour between men and women and young adults, utilizing traditional and popular media;
- (c) Address the human, social and cultural rights of women, in order to strengthen reproductive health and HIV/AIDS policy and programme design and development;
- (d) Ensure that HIV/AIDS counseling, treatment and care is available to all women including those living in rural and isolated communities, and that VCT (voluntary counseling and testing) is available to women, and their partners, who so desire it;
- (e) Strengthen legal and social measures that protect women and children from all forms of sexual violence including child sexual abuse, incest, and trafficking as these relate to the economic and social costs of HIV/AIDS to Caribbean SIDS;
- (f) Develop legislation which makes it a criminal offence to intentionally infect another person with HIV/AIDS, and provides for civil remedies for a person so infected;
- (g) Ensure that appropriate health programmes such as anti-malaria programmes are supported for persons, especially pregnant women, living in countries, so affected;
- (h) Encourage research and gender analysis of existing data in order to inform policy and programmes; and
- (i) Governments, as signatories to CEDAW, should take into account the provisions which protect the rights of women and girls in regard to HIV/AIDS and ensure that gender analysis is mainstreamed in all national HIV/AIDS policies, plans and programmes,

## **3. Strengthening institutional mechanisms**

- (a) Strengthen national machineries through increased financial and human resources, and provide greater autonomy and strategic positioning in order to carry out their mandates effectively and efficiently;

- (b) Provide national machineries with requisite technical skills in gender analysis, the support of policy analysts, and the availability of sex disaggregated data to effectively mainstream gender throughout government policies and programmes;
- (c) Strengthen collaboration between the National Women's Machineries (NWMs), the regional and international agencies, tertiary institutions and civil society; and
- (d) Support and recognize the existing institutions within the subregion such as the University of the West Indies, and other academic institutions, international organizations and agencies and others, which are supporting the mechanisms for gender mainstreaming in the subregion.

Further agree to report, most importantly, on the outcome of this subregional meeting and on the status of preparations for the Ninth Session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean to our respective ministries of foreign affairs;

Thank the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for its hospitality and for the facilities made available to participating delegations at this subregional meeting.

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