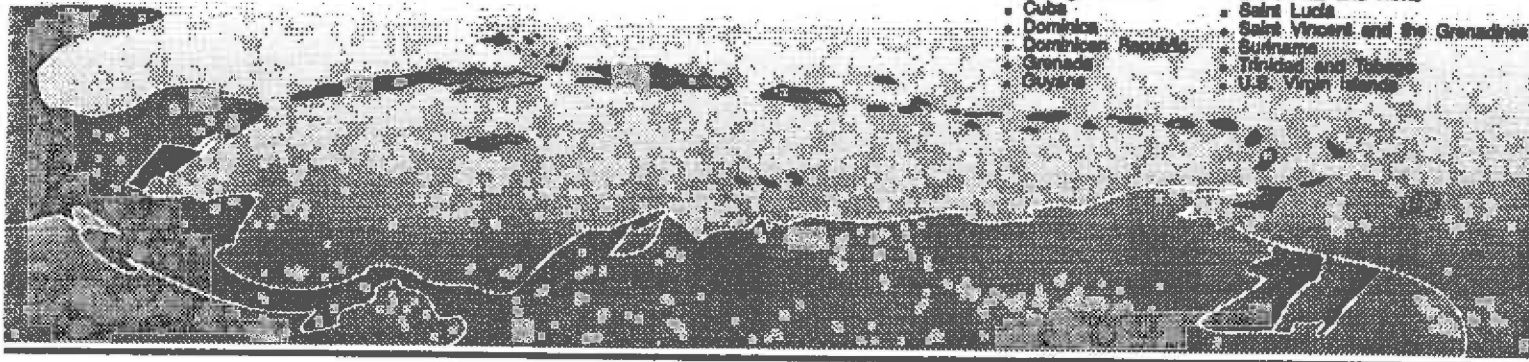




**UN ECLAC/CDCC**

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Aruba
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Br. Virgin Islands
- Cuba
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- Grenada
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Jamaica
- Montserrat
- Netherlands Antilles
- Puerto Rico
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Suriname
- Trinidad and Tobago
- U.S. Virgin Islands



Fifteenth session of CDCC  
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic  
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**REPORT ON THE PREPARATIONS UNDERTAKEN  
IN THE CARIBBEAN BY ECLAC/CDCC FOR THE  
UNITED NATIONS FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN:  
ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE, BEIJING 1995**



**UNITED NATIONS**  
**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**  
Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean  
**CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION COMMITTEE**

**REPORT ON THE PREPARATIONS UNDERTAKEN  
IN THE CARIBBEAN BY ECLAC/CDCC FOR THE  
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**BACKGROUND**

The member States of the United Nations, by General Assembly resolution 45/129, endorsed the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution 1990/12 of 24 May 1990, in which the Council recommended that a world conference on women should be held in 1995 and requested that the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) act as preparatory body for the World Conference. By resolution 36/8A, the Commission on the Status of Women agreed to hold the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, from 4-15 September 1995 at Beijing, China.

The purposes of the Fourth World Conference on women are:

- (a) To review and appraise the advancement of women since 1985 in terms of the objectives of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the year 2000.
- (b) To mobilize women and men at both the policy-making and grass roots levels to achieve those objectives;
- (c) To adopt a "Platform for Action", concentrating on some of the key issues identified as representing a fundamental obstacle to the advancement of the majority of women in the world. It will include elements relating to awareness-raising, decision-making, literacy, poverty, health, violence, national machinery, refugees and technology;
- (d) To determine the priorities to be followed in 1966-2001 for implementation of the Strategies within the United Nations System.

The Commission on the Status of women at its thirty-sixth session decided that in keeping with the above, the agenda for the Conference should include:

- (a) The second review and appraisal of progress made in the implementation of the Forward Looking Strategies;
- (b) The Platform for Action;

(c) The main conclusions and recommendations of regional preparatory conferences; and

(d) Institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Platform for Action.

Also it was agreed in its resolution 36/8C that the Conference should be preceded by a forum of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as had occurred in Mexico, Copenhagen and Nairobi.

For the World Conference and the documentation laid before it to be truly representative of the world's women, the Commission on the Status of Women underlined the importance of national level preparations which should culminate in the production of a national report.

Because this exercise was recognized as a complex process, the CSW requested the United Nations Secretariat to assist countries by providing guidelines for the preparation of national reports.

In keeping with its mandate, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean/Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (ECLAC/CDCC) has been providing technical assistance to governments and non-governmental organizations in the subregion in the preparatory process.

## REVIEW OF THE PREPARATORY PROCESS

The purpose of the preparatory process in the subregion was to make technical assistance available to territories in the subregion for the production of their national reports and to encourage and facilitate dialogue and consensus-building at the national, regional and global levels. The rationale was that a well-prepared subregion could be more effective in its regional and global interventions. To that end, the ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean undertook the following:

1. **Provision of technical assistance to the CARICOM/UNIFEM meeting in Barbados,** of the Heads of Women's machineries from CARICOM member countries, and Country Consultants commissioned by CARICOM, regarding the use of United Nations Guidelines. This Office also informed participants of the regional and global schedule of preparatory activities (October 1993-September 1995). A draft communications plan was designed by this Office and made available to the countries in the national machineries in the subregion to assist with the dissemination of information at the national and regional level.

2. **Organization of an "Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting Preparatory to the Fourth World Conference 1995",** Havana, Cuba, January 1994, of CDCC member countries other than CARICOM member countries which had not participated at the CARICOM Barbados meeting of October 1993. The rationale for the meeting was as follows:

Heads of National Machineries from the Commonwealth Caribbean met in Barbados, October 1993, to discuss the United Nations Guidelines for preparation of National Reports for the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995. The meeting provided technical assistance to participants for the implementation of their national, subregional and regional preparatory activities for the Conference. It created an opportunity to begin the dialogue required for achieving the Platform for Action. As the focal point for activities in the region, ECLAC/CDCC saw the need to facilitate such a meeting among Spanish, Dutch, French and other English-speaking non-CARICOM member Caribbean countries.

At that meeting, representatives of the Women's Machineries of the non-CARICOM/CDCC member countries:

- (a) were briefed on the elements in the preparatory process leading up to the World Conference;
- (b) discussed activities which needed to be undertaken at the national level; and
- (c) were provided with technical assistance in data collection methodologies and the preparation of country reports, using the United Nations Guidelines as a basis. (January 1994)

3. **A campaign to collect the National Reports of all CDCC member and associate member countries.** This had to be completed in a timely manner so as to ensure that data from all CDCC member countries could become part of the subregional, regional and then global analysis. This office was successful in collecting data from all but one CDCC member country.

4. **Preparation of a subregional document which synthesized the Commonwealth Caribbean report,** commissioned by CARICOM and the national reports of the remaining CDCC member countries. It was planned that this draft subregional document would be tabled for approval at a subregional preparatory conference planned for 28-29 June 1994 in Curacao, Netherlands Antilles.

The document was prepared in three sections. The first providing a global, hemispheric and subregional context for the analysis of the national reports with a special section on the changing development paradigms. In addition, this section contained an overview of the key concerns which had been identified in the national reports and around

which consensus had been growing during the preparatory process. These concerns were identified as follows:

- (a) The impact of the movement of people in and out of the region and within countries, on the conditions of women;
- (b) The growing violent culture in the subregion and the unending stream of violence directed against women;
- (c) The special, yet differing, cases of Haiti and Cuba;
- (d) The continuing status of the dependent territories (or Non-Independent Caribbean Countries (NICCs));
- (e) The plight of the indigenous women in the subregion;
- (f) The issue of ethnicity, race, culture and the advancement of women;
- (g) The need for greater improvement in the mechanisms created for the coordinating and monitoring of the integration of women in development at the national and subregional levels;
- (h) The position of women in the decision-making apparatus of the societies in the subregion;
- (i) The worsening position of poor women and their dependants and special groups such as the elderly and the disabled;
- (j) The condition of and position of women in the informal sector and in low-wage/low-skill jobs.

Section Two of the document provided a comparative analysis of the national indicators as outlined by the United Nations Guidelines. Through this mechanism the document is able to provide a picture of the status of women in the subregion which is comparable to other subregions and regions of the world.

Section Three outlines overriding goals, regional objectives for technical cooperation and specific objectives regarding the eight critical areas of concern for future action as outlined by the CSW guidelines for national reporting.

5. **Organization of the subregional preparatory Conference of ECLAC/CDCC member countries held in Curacao, 28-29 June 1994, and provision technical assistance to the NGO forum which was being hosted parallel to the governmental meeting, 27-29 June.**

The objectives of the subregional preparatory conference were:

- (a) To approve the Caribbean subregional report which will be tabled at the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Conference, Mar de Plata, Argentina in September 1994;
- (b) To consider the special issue papers which have been prepared; and
- (c) To discuss activities which need to be undertaken at the national level.

The document, "Achieving Social Justice, Equity and Development: A review of the Status of Women of the Caribbean Subregion in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995" received the support of the delegates present and it will now be revised to allow additional data, unavailable at the time of preparation, to be included. Section III of the document will also be revised based on recommendations at the meeting and will in essence be the Caribbean Platform for Action, having been approved by consensus.

The document will be tabled as the Caribbean position at the ECLAC Regional preparatory conference, at Mar del Plata, Argentina, in September 1994.

Twenty Caribbean countries attended the meeting, 12 countries represented at the ministerial level. Of those attending, Anguilla and Turks and Caicos had not yet attained associate member status in the CDCC. The meeting also attracted a wide cross section of observers from intergovernmental organizations: the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and the World Food Programme (WFP). CARICOM was represented by Mr. Rudy Collins the Assistant Secretary General (Ag.) and a team of four advisers and resource persons. Special guests came from the British Development Division for the Caribbean (BDDC).

The Secretary General of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Ms. Gertrude Mongella, addressed the gathering at the formal closing and advised Ministers present "to come to Beijing with commitments from their governments and intergovernmental agencies to improve the status of women in specific areas", only in that way she advised would the World Conference on Women (WCW) not become an avenue for complaints nor a talk shop.



A parallel NGO forum to which approximately 100 women from the subregion attended, took place on 27-29 June 1994. A report of their meeting was presented at the governmental meeting.

Following the subregional conference the Board of Presiding Officers for the Integration of Women in Development of ECLAC met at the same venue from 30 June to 1 July 1994.

### SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL REPORTS

National reports indicated that women in the Caribbean are still under-represented in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels, although their participation has increased slightly in almost all areas for the period under review, for example, participation in parliamentary assemblies - despite women representing 50 per cent of the population their representation in parliamentary assemblies grew from a low 10 per cent in 1980, to 12 per cent in 1985 to 13 per cent in 1992; in the sphere of economic decision makers, arrived at through indicators of women as employers/own account workers and women in business establishments, the data indicated that women fared better in this area than in political decision-making. Women represented 25 per cent of the total employers and own account workers in 1980, this increased to 29 per cent in 1985 and 35 per cent in 1992; in business establishments data suggest women play a significant role here. In 1980 women represented 20 per cent of the total, 25 per cent in 1985 and 49 per cent in 1992.

The data for education implies that in the subregion at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels there is almost equal access to education for women, only at the technical level was there some bias towards men. National reports, however, articulated concern for the drop-out rates of young girls that seems to be increasing in the present economic climate and the gender bias still prevalent in the education system which results in young girls pursuing traditional areas of study and employment.

A worrying trend in migration was noted regarding the emigration of young well-educated women. The World Bank has estimated that the Caribbean subregion has the highest rate of migration in the world.

Escalating violence, particularly violence against women and domestic violence against women and children was one of the key concerns voiced by all national reports. This was one area where the collaboration of governments and NGOs has resulted in the implementation of sound programmes, from shelters for battered women and children, to training for police officers and new legislation. There was consensus, however, that much more was required to stem the tide of violence.

The continuing status of the NICCs and the impact of same on the status of women in those countries was identified as a key concern among the countries of the subregion. This was so particularly in relation to the signing of relevant international conventions and agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In addition, the laws of heritage and citizenship as they impinge on women's lives were identified as requiring review.

A disturbing trend in child labour was noted as families attempted to cope with their shrinking incomes by increasingly involving children in income-generating activities to help fill the gap. This had implications for school drop-out rates, teenage fertility and delinquency. Because in the Caribbean, a strong correlation exists between unemployment and poverty, the high rates of female unemployment in all territories was of deep concern. The increasing burden on elderly women on fixed incomes, due to the care for grandchildren in the absence of parents, was a growing and disturbing phenomenon.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE PROCESS

Of the 22 CDCC member countries, 20 participated fully in the preparatory process. The only two countries which did not participate were Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands. Unfortunately, the Puerto Rican Commission on the Status of Women was in a state of transition making it unavailable for the meeting in January 1994 in Havana. The United States Virgin Islands, although expressing quite a bit of interest in the process, was also unavailable for the January meeting.

The remaining 20 CDCC member and associate member countries expressed great enthusiasm for the preparatory process and through their efforts the Caribbean subregion has become an example for other subregions in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

The entire process would not have been possible without the commitment and support from agencies and embassies in the subregion. Special thanks to UNIFEM which supported the hosting of the Havana meeting, UNICEF which supported participation at meetings, BDDC for supporting attendance at the Curacao meeting, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for supporting participation at meetings and the CARICOM Secretariat not only for their financial support but for the collaborative spirit which they demonstrated and fostered.

The Caribbean is now well-prepared to participate at the ECLAC Regional Preparatory Conference in September 1994 in Mar del Plata, Argentina.