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**REPORT OF THE SUBREGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE CARIBBEAN
FOR THE TENTH SESSION OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE
ON WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda, 22-23 May 2007

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date of the meeting

1. The subregional preparatory meeting for the Caribbean for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean was held on 22 and 23 May 2007 in St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda.

Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following member countries of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname. Three associate members of the Commission were also represented: British Virgin Islands, Netherlands Antilles and Turks and Caicos Islands.
3. The representatives of the following countries and territories attended as observers: Cayman Islands and Ecuador.
4. Attending as observers were representatives of the following United Nations bodies: United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).
5. Also attending the meeting were representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations: Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) and the Centre for Gender and Development Studies (CGDS) of the University of the West Indies.
6. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN Caribbean) and the National Union of Domestic Employees (NUDE) of Trinidad and Tobago.

Chairperson and rapporteur

7. The officers elected to preside over the meeting were as follows:

Chairperson: Antigua and Barbuda

Alternate Chairpersons: Grenada and Saint Lucia

Rapporteur: Jamaica

B. AGENDA

8. The following agenda was adopted:

1. Organization of work and adoption of the agenda
2. Presentation of position paper prepared by ECLAC, entitled “Women’s contribution to equality in Latin America and the Caribbean”
3. Debate and comments on the two issues addressed in the position paper: “Political participation and gender parity in decision-making processes at all levels” and “Analysis of the contribution of women to the economy and social protection, especially in relation to unpaid work performed by women”
4. Towards the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

C. SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

9. At the opening session, statements were made by:

- Sheila Roseau, Executive Director, Directorate of Gender Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda
- Neil Pierre, Director, ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean
- Sonia Montano, Chief, Women and Development Unit, ECLAC
- Roberta Clarke, Regional Programme Director, UNIFEM Caribbean Regional Office
- Hon. Jacqui Quinn-Leandro, Minister of Labour, Public Administration and Empowerment, Antigua and Barbuda
- Hon. Senator Hazlyn Mason Francis, President of Senate, Antigua and Barbuda

10. The Executive Director of the Directorate of Gender Affairs of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda chaired the opening ceremony and welcomed the participants. She stated that the main task of the meeting was to analyse the document entitled “Women’s contribution to equality in Latin America and the Caribbean” and underlined the importance of the two main issues discussed therein —political participation and gender parity in decision-making processes at all levels and women’s contribution to the economy and social protection, especially in relation to unpaid work performed by women— for strengthening national machineries for women’s advancement and gender affairs in the Caribbean.

11. The Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean recalled the importance attributed to the issues of gender parity and women’s unpaid work in the Beijing Platform for Action and noted that the region still had a long way to go to give women a stronger voice in decision-making and to make visible the link between their reproductive work and their contribution to the economy.

12. The Regional Programme Director of UNIFEM Regional Office for the Caribbean suggested conducting an examination of the changes that would ensue if women were given parity in decision-making and their contribution to economy was valued. She advocated for an open discussion in order to form a wider

understanding of politics, economic contribution and violence, all based on relationships between men and women.

13. The Chief of the Women and Development Unit of ECLAC compared global and national processes and showed that positive changes were being seen at the national level, even though global changes seemed much slower. In a recent illustration of this, the member countries attending the Subregional preparatory meeting for Central America and Mexico for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which had been held the previous week in Guatemala City, had unanimously agreed to standardize their respective legislations on the rights of paid domestic workers. The subregional meetings represented an opportunity to identify the perspectives that member countries considered most strategic to fuel progress in their region.

14. The Minister of Labour, Public Administration and Empowerment of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda referred to the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and the conventions of the International Labour Organization and asked the participants to focus also on the conditions women faced in the labour market, since parity and equality called for dignified working conditions and social protection for women's unpaid work. As for political participation, she insisted on the importance of capacity-building to augment capabilities to participate in decision-making.

15. The President of the Senate of Antigua and Barbuda conveyed the greetings of the Prime Minister of that country and gave an account of the progress made there regarding women's access to executive power.

16. The Chief of ECLAC Women and Development Unit presented the document "Women's contribution to equality in Latin America and the Caribbean", which had been prepared on the basis of the two thematic issues approved at the thirty-ninth meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. On that occasion, it had been agreed that the existing gains in the quest for gender equality would be lost if obstacles to gender parity were not overcome and if women's unwaged work remained invisible. The presentation focused particularly on the interrelations between the conceptual aspects of the political representation of women and their contribution to the economy and outlined the main points of the regional diagnosis on both issues.

17. Complementing the Commission's presentation were two specific papers on "Women's political participation and gender parity in decision-making at all levels in the Caribbean" and "The contribution of women to the economy and social protection, especially in relation to unpaid work performed by women in the Caribbean", which were also to be incorporated into the final version of the position paper to be presented at the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women.

18. Statements were then made by the representatives of the countries attending the meeting. The delegates commented in a general manner on the position paper and provided additional information that had not been available for inclusion during the initial preparation.

19. Regarding the issue of political participation and gender parity, the concept of quotas was a particular focus of debate and the delegates recommended that the rate of women's inclusion in decision-making at all levels be increased.

20. Much of the discussion on women's contribution to the economy revolved around the situation of paid domestic workers and the priority that governments, in the delegates' view, should afford to the alleviation of domestic work in order to eliminate the obstacles preventing poor women from accessing the

labour market. The delegations put forward recommendations for the completion of the document's analytical framework and suggested ways to raise governments' awareness and promote political measures in order to confer visibility upon and account for women's contribution to the economy and to domestic work.

21. The representative of UNIFEM presented an analysis of shared family responsibilities and gender equality in the Caribbean as a contribution to the position paper.

22. The ECLAC secretariat summarized the most relevant aspects of the debate.

23. The Chief of the ECLAC Women and Development Unit reported on the organization and working sessions of the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

24. The President of the National Women's Council of Ecuador thanked the participants for the opportunity to participate in the subregional meeting as an observer and conveyed the greetings of her Government, in its capacity as host of the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

25. Statements were made by representatives of the following United Nations Organizations: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). In their statements, the representatives reported on the contribution made by their respective organizations to the preparation of the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

26. The representatives of the member countries made comments and referred to the preparation of the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

D. AGREEMENTS ADOPTED

27. Annex II contains the St. John's Declaration, which was distributed by the Ministers of the Caribbean with responsibility for women's affairs and government representatives participating in the meeting with a view to transmitting their recommendations for strengthening the process towards the attainment of gender equality, social justice and development in the subregion.

28. The representatives of the member countries participating in the Subregional preparatory meeting for the Caribbean for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean agreed to:

1. *Thank* the Government of Antigua and Barbuda and, in particular, the Directorate of Gender Affairs for the organization of the meeting and their warm welcome;

2. *Congratulate* the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on the document entitled "Women's contribution to equality in Latin America and the Caribbean", which had been presented for their consideration, and express appreciation of the conceptual aspects of the document, especially the close links it established between parity and care work;

3. *Commend* the authors of the two specific papers on the issues of gender parity and unpaid work in the Caribbean, which provided valuable information on the specific situation in the countries of the subregion;

4. *Request* the secretariat to complete the position paper having in mind the following suggestions:

Regarding women's political participation and gender parity in decision-making at all levels

- (i) Integrate comparative statistical information presented in the specific paper on the Caribbean into the position paper being prepared by ECLAC and incorporate new data provided by the countries into the final version of the two papers on gender parity and unpaid work in the Caribbean;
- (ii) Expand on the different existing modalities of parity;
- (iii) Undertake efforts to fill gaps in the information on women's positions in trade unions, cabinets, the executive branches of political parties, the judiciary, ambassadorial posts and private business;
- (iv) Ensure that all the relevant information provided by the member countries is reflected in the final document.

Regarding the contribution of women to the economy and social protection, especially in relation to unpaid work

- (v) Integrate information on the existing legislation on paid domestic workers in the Caribbean countries and analyse the impact of these workers' exclusion from national insurance schemes and from the occupational safety and health acts that most countries have been implementing in the framework of their agendas on decent work;
- (vi) Expand the analysis to include other issues, such as:
 - (a) Women's unpaid work in the informal economy and on community farms;
 - (b) The phenomenon of poor children placed in families other than their own to carry out unpaid domestic work, known as "restaveks" in Haiti, and how this ties in with the invisibility of unpaid work and the domestic support that poor women heads of household need in order to go out to work;
 - (c) The additional burden of care caused by the impact of HIV/AIDS in most countries of the Caribbean;
 - (d) The situation of female migrant workers who marry nationals in their destination country or enter into illegal activities in order to regularize their immigrant status and the cost implications of such proceedings;
 - (e) The situation of women who are the spouses of migrant workers and whom the law does not permit access to social protection;
- (vii) Incorporate a section on existing childcare facilities and programmes in the context of social protection;

- (viii) Include considerations on the impact of economic adjustment and the reduction of social services as a result of global trade liberalization;

5. *Request* those countries that have not already done so to complete the questionnaires sent by ECLAC in September 2006 in order to include their national data in the documentation for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women;

6. *Acknowledge* the information sent by the Government of Haiti in response to the ECLAC questionnaire that was not included in the preliminary documentation for the Regional Conference;

7. *Convey* to the secretariat as soon as possible specific comments on the preliminary version of the position paper as well as any additional information that should be included in the final version to be presented at the Regional Conference;

8. *Encourage* the member countries to give broad support to affirmative action and explore systems to ensure that women are represented in the legislative and executive branches of government, including legislated or voluntary party quotas of 30% to 50%;

9. *Urge* the member countries to provide sufficient resources to women's organizations involved in supporting, researching or encouraging greater participation by women in electoral processes, at all times and not only during election periods;

10. *Encourage* the provision of training in order to strengthen and build up women's capacity for political participation, including the capability to conduct a gendered assessment of public policies;

11. *Support* efforts to establish female membership quotas of 50% for boards, especially where the appointment is remunerated, in the public and private sectors;

12. *Underline* the ongoing need to strengthen national machineries for the advancement of women, with a special emphasis on positioning women's or gender bureaus as lead agencies in order to augment their technical capacity to conduct gendered assessment of public policies;

13. *Seek* ways to upgrade research infrastructure and enhance the monitoring and evaluation capacity of national women's or gender bureaus, in order to facilitate gender equality;

14. *Urge* national machineries for the advancement of women and women's and political organizations in the Caribbean to establish linkages and partnerships with the Caribbean Institute for Women in politics in order to:

- (i) Provide training grounded in the rights-based approach with a political commitment to gender and social equity, the empowerment of women and good governance for sustainable development;
- (ii) Make deliberate and sustained efforts to stimulate, strengthen and increase opportunities for women's participation at the highest level of decision-making and to provide training in the ethics and practice of politics;
- (iii) Institute cross-party and non-partisan exchanges and networking on gender equality issues;

(iv) Promote voter education on gender equity issues;

15. *Address* cultural beliefs through education, in order to reduce the stereotypical profiling of women and raise awareness of their eligibility for political leadership;

16. *Review* past gender equity initiatives in order to evaluate their achievements and improve approaches;

17. *Maintain* close links with non-governmental organizations in order to build the capacity to promote social changes and to support the issue of quotas and training in politics;

18. *Seek* ways to facilitate access to increased resources for research and to secure data on women's contribution to care work, including unpaid activities in the community and the wider society;

19. *Propose* that technical assistance be provided to accelerate the review and implementation of the Family Law and Domestic Violence Legal and Judicial Reform Project being spearheaded by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, including the model legislation aimed at ensuring a more effective and responsive delivery of legal and social services in support of shared family responsibilities;

20. *Congratulate* the National Union of Domestic Employees on its extensive presentation on the situation of domestic workers;

21. *Examine* all existing legislation to ensure that domestic workers are included in the definition of the term "worker", as well as the institution of measures to enact and adopt legislation for the provision of decent working conditions, including fixed working hours, sick leave, maternity leave, vacation, health insurance and social security;

22. *Promote* policies to provide daytime and after-school childcare facilities, as well as programmes and mechanisms to facilitate women's access to the labour market and support poverty eradication efforts;

23. *Consider* the emerging issue of maternity leave for women who adopt newborn children;

24. *Examine* the introduction of insurance for the self-employed as part of legislation or policies on social security;

25. *Support* the enactment of legislation on the measurement of unpaid work and efforts to develop the institutional mechanisms to carry out the process;

26. *Consider* the need to train census enumerators and national statistical staff in gender data collection and analysis related to unpaid work;

27. *Express* the need for assessment reports to include policy and programme recommendations aimed at supporting households headed by women and encouraging men to assume familial responsibilities;

28. *Call* for a comprehensive public campaign to raise awareness of women's contribution to social and economic development, involving women's organizations, gender bureaus, the Caribbean Community, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and all United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies operating in the Caribbean;

29. *Present* reports at the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean that assess the progress made and the obstacles encountered in the follow-up to the Mexico City Consensus at the national level.

Annex I

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Annex II

**CARIBBEAN SUBREGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE TENTH SESSION OF
THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN**

St. John's, Antigua, 22-23 May 2007

ST. JOHN'S DECLARATION

We the *Ministers* with responsibility for women's affairs of the Caribbean and government representatives participating in the Caribbean Subregional Preparatory Meeting for the tenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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 and in keeping with the tenets of the Millennium Development Goals to achieve gender equality;

Congratulate the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on the excellent preparations for this meeting, including the presentation of substantive reports and presentations that informed and guided our deliberations;

Reaffirm and endorse the themes of women's political participation in decision-making processes and women's contributions through unpaid work;

Reaffirm also that gender equality is a necessary condition for achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and United Nations conferences;

Recognize that achieving gender parity in decision-making and political institutions is a valid gender equality goal in its own right, as well as a critical instrumental condition for achieving the Millennium Development Goals;

Reaffirm the need for adequate estimation, quantification and valuation of the significant contribution that women make to the economy and to social protection and well-being through paid and unpaid work, at home, in society and in the workplace, and particularly as the main provider of unpaid care;

Recognize that achievement of progress on the care work and parity aspects of inequality requires gender conciliatory policies in terms of gender roles in the productive (work) and reproductive (family) spheres. As such, we stress the need for addressing other pressing issues which prevent the full enjoyment of human rights by women, including: gender-based violence, the lack of economic empowerment and independence, and limited access to sexual and reproductive services, which result in vulnerability to violence and the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, as well as any other factors constraining women's opportunities in public and private life;

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

I. Women's political participation and gender parity in decision-making processes at all levels

1. Support the establishment of the Caribbean Institute for Women in Politics as a partnership of National Women's Machineries (NWMs), women's organizations and political institutions to:
 - provide training in the rights-based approach with a political commitment to gender and social equity, the empowerment of women and good governance for sustainable development
 - bring deliberate and sustained effort to stimulate, strengthen and increase opportunities for women's participation at the highest level of decision-making
 - provide training in the ethics and practice of politics
 - build cross-party and non-partisan sharing and networking on gender equality issues
 - promote voter education on gender equity issues;
2. Undertake a review of past initiatives and approaches to supporting women's political participation with a view to enhancing the effectiveness and impact of such work in the future;
3. Explore systems for guaranteeing representation of women in the legislature and on statutory boards, including through legislated or voluntary quotas;
4. Provide support to women's organizations which are involved in research or are encouraging the greater participation of women in electoral processes throughout the political cycle;
5. Address the cultural issues that lead to the fact that as citizens women are not supporting other women for leadership positions, and raise consciousness about the importance of achieving gender parity for the common good;

II. Unpaid work

1. Provide technical support to:
 - Accelerate the review and implementation of the OECS Family Law and Domestic Violence Reform Project, including the model laws, to ensure more effective and responsive legal and social service delivery in support of shared family responsibilities and to alleviate the poverty of women's households;
2. Conduct further empirical studies on women's unrecognized contribution to the economy, particularly their participation in the informal sector.

