



REPUBLIC OF GUYANA

STATEMENT

By

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On Behalf of the CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

**ON AGENDA ITEM 59 (a) and (b):
Advancement of Women and Implementation of the
Outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and
Of the twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly**

**United Nations Headquarters
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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on agenda item 59 (a) and (b): concerning the Advancement of Women and Implementation of the Outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the Twenty-third Special Session of the General Assembly. CARICOM aligns itself with the statement made by the Representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. I take this opportunity to offer my delegation's congratulations to you and to the other members of the Bureau on your election. We are confident that your diplomatic skills and experience will prove invaluable in guiding the work of this Committee to a successful conclusion.

Mr. Chairman,

The international community is currently confronted by a series of stern challenges. The ongoing and far-reaching financial crisis, along with high crude oil and food prices, will no doubt adversely affect our common agenda for the empowerment of women, and for the attainment of the goals elaborated in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration. For developing states, the future seems even more challenging since the effects of the recent crises compound those posed by an already unequal global trading system and by the non-fulfillment of commitments to adequately finance development. The prospect looms that the gains realized in key areas of human development such as education and health, and even the fight against the disproportionate level of poverty among women and girls may be erased by global financial instability and a possible shift of national and international attention to larger macroeconomic issues.

In his message in UNIFEM's 2008/2009 Report on the Progress of the World's Women under the title "Who Answers to Women - Gender and Accountability?", UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon noted that the slowest progress with regard to the attainment of the MDGs was to be found in the area of gender equality and the empowerment of women. As the Secretary-General pointed out, the analysis contained in the Report suggests that the non-achievement of gender equality commitments in some contexts may be more attributed to the lack of accountability to women than to a shortage of resources. CARICOM delegations wish to register our concern at the lack of progress on gender equality. We concur with the view that women are entitled to an accounting for the policies that have an impact on their wellbeing and role in society and urge that mechanisms be put in place to address commitments with regard to the empowerment of women.

Mr. Chairman,

The 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women convened under the priority theme "Financing for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women," underscored the importance of adequate financing to increase gender sensitive policies and programmes and to strengthen national women's mechanisms and institutions. The integration of a gender perspective into national budgeting and the adoption of a

gender sensitive approach, particularly in areas such as finance, trade, transport and rural infrastructure have now assumed urgency. It is pointless to stress the nexus between women and sustainable development if little or no resources are made available to complement and ensure the implementation of agreed goals and actions.

In this regard, CARICOM calls attention to the upcoming review conference on financing for development and implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, as an opportunity to accord greater attention to the role of women in development as well as to address existing gaps in financing. As noted in the Report of the Secretary-General A/63/217, the reviews conducted by the General Assembly of the action areas in the Monterrey Consensus highlighted inter alia, the importance of respect for labour standards and the need for greater social responsibility and gender-sensitivity by the business sector, the need for additional social expenditures made available as a result of debt reduction to take into account the gender perspective and the mainstreaming a gender into development policies. CARICOM supports the need for action in these areas.

Mr. Chairman,

Women constitute a significant proportion of migrant workers and in spite of their contribution to the economic development of the countries of origin and destination continue to be vulnerable to many forms of discrimination. CARICOM views the forthcoming World Forum on Migration and Development to be held in the Philippines as an opportunity to advance joint and collaborative approaches on the question of migration as well as the linkage of migration to development. Such approaches would be incomplete without due attention to the gender dimensions of international migration.

Mr. Chairman,

In spite of the constraints faced, CARICOM States continue to implement policies and programmes to promote the advancement of women and ensure gender equality. As in other developing states, women in CARICOM are challenged by poverty, gender based violence, and social and cultural behavioral patterns which perpetuate gender inequality/discrimination. At the regional level priority attention is focused on the elimination of poverty especially among women, improved institutional infrastructure to address gender based violence, gender mainstreaming in the Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework for HIV/AIDS, as well as in National Strategic Plans, the alignment of MDG targets to those of the Community in the areas of health and education, and incorporation of localized targets into the national development agenda.

Countries of the region have also enacted legislation to address gender based discrimination with attention also focused on the establishment of mechanisms to end and redress violence against women. In this context, CARICOM commends the Secretary-General on the launch earlier this year of the campaign "United to End Violence Against Women," which would strengthen awareness and facilitate the development of partnerships to end violence against women.

Within the region there is clear recognition that the empowerment of women, promotion of sustainable development and the strengthening of democracy are inextricably linked. As such greater attention is being focused on the full and active participation of women in public life and decision making. While two CARICOM States have already attained the agreed benchmarks in these areas, in five others the Speaker of the House is female which adds visibility to women in power. The general thrust is to increase the participation of women in governmental bodies in the region.

CARICOM commends the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on the occasion of their 25th Anniversary celebrated in July of this year. The embedding of the principle that women's rights are human rights and the promotion of strict adherence to treaty obligations to end discrimination against women are two of the hallmarks of this Committee. We therefore reiterate our support for the valuable work in which it is engaged.

Mr. Chairman,

The creation of a strengthened gender architecture in the context of UN reform and system wide coherence continues to engage the attention of CARICOM States. We have noted the progress made so far and in keeping with resolution 62/277, now await a further detailed paper covering modalities on options as it relates to funding, governance structure, staffing, specific functions and the relationship of this new architecture with the Commission on the Status of Women and other bodies. CARICOM reiterates the need to fully address all concerns of Member States as well as inclusivity and balance in the approach to this process.

Mr. Chairman,

On October 15, the International Day of Rural Women will be observed. It is more than appropriate that we pause to recognize the contribution made as well as the constraints faced by these women. Rural women constitute a majority in most developing countries and are responsible for a substantial quantity of the food produced in these countries. Yet still, these women encounter obstacles which undermine their empowerment. The global food crisis should serve as a call to action regarding the issues that affect rural women such as low levels of land ownership, limited or no access to credit and high levels of poverty.

Mr. Chairman,

Women across the world who experience discrimination in various forms and manifestations expect us not only to advocate but also find innovative ways to help them to overcome these challenges and inequalities. We must not fail them. Let us therefore recommit ourselves to the attainment of the MDGS and to the realization of the goals and objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action.

I thank you.