

Remarks by Dr. Hilary Brown
Programme Manager, Culture and Community Development
CARICOM Secretariat
CARICOM/UN Women Meeting Preparatory to CSW66
17 February 2022

I'm delighted to bring you greetings on behalf of Secretary General, H.E. Dr. Carla Barnett and to warmly welcome you to the conclusion of a two-day Regional meeting towards Building a Coordinated Caribbean position, preparatory to the Sixty-Sixth Session of the *Commission on the Status of Women*. CSW 66 you would know is scheduled for 14-25 March at the United Nations in New York. This year, the CSW theme focuses on: *Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change, Environmental and Disaster Risk Reduction Policies and Programmes*.

The Commission on the Status of Women is the principal global intergovernmental body dedicated to the promotion of Gender Equality. Annually, Member States gather at the UN headquarters to evaluate progress, address challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to not only promote gender equality, but also advance the status of women worldwide.

This virtual Meeting today which is primarily for CARICOM ministers with responsibility for Gender Affairs and Heads of National Gender Machineries, is being held in collaboration with UN Women. I would like to express our thanks and appreciation to Tonni-Ann Brodber and her team and her team for their continued support and partnership in this annual preparation of the region for CSW. I would also like to warmly welcome and say a very special thank you to our keynote speaker, Dr. Colin Young, Executive Director of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC). We are very pleased to have you with us and look forward to your address on: *Climate Financing and Gender Equality: Inclusive Approaches to Climate and Disaster Resilience*.

Most of us present today would be aware that today's meeting was preceded by an excellent sensitization meeting on 3 February, which focused on issues related to achieving gender equality in the context of climate change and disaster risk management. That session provided valuable information and an informative discussion, to increase the capacity of Member States to address these issues, as we work towards finalizing the Draft CARICOM Statement so that it reflects the needs and priorities of the region going into CSW66.

Climate change affects men and women differently. Factors including social status and poverty levels contribute to gendered impacts of climate change, which along with extreme weather events such as droughts, flooding and hurricanes, have had adverse social, economic and physical effects on our region. Women are often responsible for growing, gathering and preparing food, collecting water for drinking and sanitation and sourcing fuel for heating and cooking. With climate change, these everyday tasks, part of women's undue burden of care, have and continue to become more laborious for 70% of the world's poor who according to the World Bank are women. Extreme weather events such as droughts and floods exacerbate these conditions.

Climate change you may agree, is one of the most complex challenges of our time- it requires a concerted, proactive and holistic response. And in as much the same way that women are absent from the decision-making table to map COVID recovery strategies, women are also largely absent from climate change decision-making processes. This needs to be addressed to ensure that gender inequality does not serve as a barrier to the adaptive capacity and resilience of women, families and communities and reduce options for climate change mitigation.

The more women and men participate on an equal basis in managing natural resources, in designing and implementing early warning systems, ensuring appropriate infrastructure for shelters and relief distribution during disasters and in the design of recovery plans, the more resilient our societies are likely to become. Climate financing must also be accessible by men and women.

In response to these challenges, Member States, UN partners, academia, the private sector and civil society need to ensure that gender equality principles are

mainstreamed in disaster and climate risk reduction policies, plans and budgets. Data collection, disaggregation and analysis through a gender lens, are critical to assessing disaster risk from a gender perspective.

In closing let me say how that I look forward to our deliberations today to elaborate our region's priorities through the CARICOM Statement for CSW 66 and wish us all a productive meeting.

I thank you...
