

REMARKS FOR Build Back Equal - Regional Steering Committee in Dominica

Launch of Build Back Equal

June 5, 2022 (9:30 AM AST)

Good afternoon,

- My name is David-Éric Simard, I am the First Secretary for Development at the Canadian High Commission to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, and your focal point from Global Affairs Canada for the Build Back Equal Project.
- My sincere apologies that I could not be with you in person today.
- I must however extend my heartfelt thanks to those whom have made my virtually presence possible.
- Thank you, Jenny, Tonni, for highlighting the breath and ambition of Build Back Equal, in such clear terms, and the necessity of Partnerships between governments, private sector, civil society, and global and regional partners, to tackle common challenges, especially in this post-covid world.

My friends.

- Canada is proud to partner with UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund. Both have a long history of excellent work in the Caribbean.
- These are partners who understand the critical role played by women and girls as agents of change for shaping the future of their societies.
- I would be remiss if I did not thank the Government of Dominica for the strong showing of support for this initiative, today, and since its inception. Same to the representatives of Grenada, St. Lucia & St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Canada recognizes that Build Back Equal will be constructing its activities on the edifice of your efforts to improve Gender Equality over the years.
 - o In Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, we see partners who share similar values.
 - o You have made great progress toward achieving gender equality.
 - o We see it in the education levels of your populations.
 - o We see it in the strong women leaders in your parliaments and governments.

- We see it in your active and engaged women's rights organizations.
 - We feel it in your presence today.
- As you may know, the pursuit of gender equality is one of Canada's key priorities, both at home and around the world. In 2017, our engagement abroad saw a major shift, when we launched Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, which made the empowerment of women and girls the cornerstone of our development cooperation.
 - The primary objective of this policy is to contribute to global efforts to eradicate poverty around the world and attainment of Sustainable Development Goals.
 - Specifically, we need to make sure that women are empowered to reach their full potential so they can earn their own livelihoods, which will benefit their families as well as the economic growth of their communities and countries.
 - Canada recognizes the multidimensionality of the challenges that confront women and girls, and our Feminist Policy expresses, that for women to attain their full potential that we must:
 - Contribute to efforts to reduce sexual and gender-based violence;
 - Strengthen women's organizations that advance women's rights;
 - support women leaders from all walks of life;
 - Improve governments' capacity to provide services to women and girls;
 - To support access to quality health care, education and sexual reproductive health and rights.
 - To foster Growth that works for Everyone, to help increase access to economic opportunities, and financing for women entrepreneurs.
 - To promote initiatives to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and create green and blue economic opportunities for women, and vulnerable persons.
 - To support inclusive governance that can support legislation and efforts to build stronger institutions.
 - We support Build Back Equal because we believe it has designed a holistic and comprehensive approach that will help increase women's ability to participate in every sphere of the modern day society: in the formal economy, in education, in health and in public life.

Friends, Build Back Equal

- will address women's economic empowerment, and leadership at all levels.
- Will address critical access to business training & innovative financing for micro & small women led businesses,
- ensure care services are integrated in gender-responsive social protection systems.
- take on unequal distribution of unpaid and domestic care work in communities and households, an important Canadian priority.
- work with you to develop and implement critical legislation
- Contribute to assist all vulnerable and marginalized people, including youth, the disabled and indigenous women in Dominica.
- strengthen access to sexual and reproductive health services and rights for women and girls.
- provide capacity building for Government entities to help reduce the incidence of gender-based violence
- The project will also work with men and boys so that they learn about equality, justice and their important roles they must take on, supporting families and communities.

You may have caught that the project captures lots of your priorities, many them we discussed in the Steering Committee this morning, this is because you have been a key contributor to the design of Build Back Equal.

Women and girls have not only been on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, they also suffered the most from its negative impacts, including increases in GBV and lost jobs and revenue.

They have also felt the disproportionate effects of natural disasters—events that are increasing in frequency because of the climate crisis - we know this needs no reminding in this country.

We now have an opportunity to do more than build back *better* from the COVID-19 pandemic, but to build back *equal as well*—to rebuild resiliently in a way that advances gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Canada remains firmly committed to supporting all countries in its pursuit of gender equality, and we know that with your commitment and leadership, that so much is possible.

Know that we stand by you, as we work together for on bringing this vision to reality.

We know that we can only get there through partnership and cooperation.

Thank you