



**Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica**

Address by

**HONOURABLE ROOSEVELT SKERRIT**

**PRIME MINISTER OF  
THE COMMONWEALTH OF DOMINICA**

**AT THE  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCHING OF THE PROJECT  
“*BUILD BACK EQUAL*”**

Monday, June 5, 2023  
Intercontinental Hotel Cabrits Resorts  
3:00 p.m.

I am honored to have this opportunity to address you today on the launch of the “Build Back Equal,” project.

Let me add my own words of welcome to you, Ministers for Gender Affairs from our sister territories; as well as our partners from the various United Nations agencies. It is my hope that you have enjoyed your stay in Dominica, the Nature Island, and that your deliberations have been fruitful.

The Launch of the “Build Back Better” Project takes place in Dominica at a time when we have been concerned, as a people and Government, with strengthening our systems against the threat of climate change and other external shocks; and empowering our women to be major players in creating a stronger society.

And so, I welcome the start of this project here, which is focused on tearing down barriers for women to access sustainable economic opportunities.

As citizens of Small Island Developing States, we know that crises always affect, disproportionately, the weakest and already marginalized groups and contribute to the creation of new vulnerabilities.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is necessary to constantly review our economic and social policies to mitigate against the vulnerabilities of small states as ours. In Dominica we are seeking to increase employment opportunities; modernize production methods; improve production output and export; and increase revenue streams. These highlight the need for tangible mechanisms to support livelihoods of vulnerable groups who are easily disenfranchised in times of economic and social stresses.

Integrating gender into every stage of response must be a core part of the Region's response and recovery strategies.

The launch of "The Build Back Equal" regional project today is critical, since it harnesses the aspirations of four (4) members of the OECS namely Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and St Vincent and the Grenadines. Our islands share a common geographical space and our many commonalities mean that we share similar challenges which can be tackled by identifying joint responses and solutions.

This project, therefore, can serve as a catalyst to achieve our national and regional goals on gender equality.

It is our expectation that this initiative will facilitate access to safe, accessible, and affordable childcare services, among other measures; which will contribute to increasing women's opportunities to pursue employment.

We endeavour to not only make the best use of all of the resources and knowledge that will be gained from this intervention but to work closely with our fellow Caribbean brothers and sisters to ensure that the project achieves its goals.

One of the key components of the project is to reinforce existing social protection measures and programmes, an area that our government continues to focus on with the establishment and ongoing implementation of various social programmes.

Recently, the Parliament of Dominica passed several pieces of legislation to include the Domestic Violence Act 2023, which strengthens our legislative framework to provide increased support for victims of domestic violence.

This piece of legislation is expected to provide greater protection and relief for victims of domestic violence and provision for the granting of protection orders as well as other related matters.

The Government's national policy framework aims to move Dominica towards a more equitable and inclusive future. It protects the rights of women, children, youth, disabled persons, older persons, minorities and marginalized groups and communities through a comprehensive set of actions and mandates to provide social protection to those who cannot support themselves and their families.

This project is therefore timely and appropriate as it supports the strengthening of our social protection programmes to meet the unique needs of women, men, boys and girls and other vulnerable groups.

As a sub-region, we are also committed to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and undoubtedly this project will support us in our national pursuit of the SDGs and more specifically SDG 8 on economic growth and SDG 5 on gender equality.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as a government we know that social protection programs when implemented successfully can enhance household purchasing power, increase savings and investments among the

beneficiary households and support heads of households in increasing income.

We look forward to the implementation of the “Build Back Equal” project which will focus on the following areas:

1. Enhancing women’s economic opportunities particularly in the tourism and agricultural sectors but across all areas.
2. Developing laws and policies and providing access to Gender and Shock Responsive Social Protection
3. Strengthening Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health ((SRH) services including addressing Gender Based Violence services.

These three focus areas are directly linked to our national and regional considerations for gender-related development and resilience-building. The Government of Dominica recognizes that gender considerations are “cross-cutting and non- negotiable”, and that women, men, girls and boys have different needs and experiences. The regional BBE project, valued at CDN\$10,000,000, will support Dominica and the other Member States to ensure that women, men, boys, girls, persons with disabilities, indigenous groups and other vulnerable populations remain a priority and that their needs are taken into consideration as we progress towards a Gender Responsive Climate Resilient Region.

The Government of Dominica expresses heartfelt thanks to the Government of Canada for the dedicated support and commitment given to the region over the years and to the UN Women MCO for implementing such a useful and timely project, which aims to contribute to women's economic resilience in the Eastern Caribbean.

We look forward to future partnerships and collaborations with you as we continue to transform our Region into a Gender Responsive haven, thus providing increased sustainable opportunities for women's economic growth.

I thank all of you for being here today.

May God bless you and may God bless the Commonwealth of Dominica