

**SPEECH TO BE DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE DR CASSANDRA WILLIAMS**  
**MINISTER OF STATE ON THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF**  
*BUILD BACK EQUAL PROJECT*  
**OPEN SESSION, MONDAY, JUNE 5, 2023 AT 3:00 P.M**

Salutation

Good afternoon.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here today on this historic occasion, for the launch of the “*Build Back Equal Project*” funded by Global Affairs Canada, with implementation being led by UN Women and UNFPA. The project will benefit four (4) Members states of the OECS namely *Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia, St Vincent, and the Grenadines*.

Special welcome to the Honorable Prime Minister, Roosevelt Skerrit and Mrs. Skerrit and Hon. Cassanni Laville, Minister for Health, Wellness and Social Services.

To the Honorable Ministers of Gender Affairs from the beneficiary countries which I had the pleasure of dialoguing with during our closed session this morning, again, *Welcome to the beautiful Nature Island of the Caribbean and to this session*.

Hearty welcome to:

- Ms. Jenny Karlsen, Deputy Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Sub- Regional Office for the Caribbean;
- Ms. Tonni Ann Brodber, Representative, UN Women Multi Country Office – Caribbean and
- David-Éric Simard, First Secretary at the Canadian High Commission in Barbados

A pleasant good afternoon to our national counterparts and colleagues across the region joining virtually via Zoom.

The Government's partnership with UN Women and UNFPA spans over a decade and has been invaluable towards building a gender equal Dominica.

Ladies and Gentlemen at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dominica was still rebuilding and recovering from the devastation brought about by the back-to-back major disasters in 2015 and 2017 respectively. These catastrophic events impacted significantly on the most vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities (PWDs), children, women and girls and female-headed households, men and women living in poverty.

National efforts have therefore aimed to build resilience among those who lack the resources to withstand the impacts of climate change. The “*Build Back Equal*” project will complement our national efforts by taking a comprehensive approach to addressing the barriers women face to economic empowerment and providing increased sustainable opportunities for women's economic growth. Economic Empowerment continues to be a key pillar of our work; investing in women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality,

poverty eradication, elimination of gender-based violence and inclusive economic growth.

I must say that we are excited about this inaugural meeting and launching today. As it kick starts, the project will bring Dominica and the other beneficiary countries closer to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals in particular Goal 5 which speaks to unpaid care work and the elimination of gender-based violence and discrimination.

As a government we are looking forward to project implementation and engaging with the various implementing agencies to ensure that project results are tangible and benefit the most vulnerable persons, the poor, the disabled and elderly, victims of abuse, migrants, and other vulnerable populations. To us, “Build Back Equal” means that as we build a climate resilient Dominica and by extension region, we must ensure that our interventions are gender responsive, that there is equitable access to benefits by women, men, boys, girls, and the aforementioned groups.

Importantly, the specific project objectives are aligned with Dominica’s National Resilience Development Strategy and more specifically the priority action to “reinforce priorities around poverty reduction, promotion of justice, and economic and social empowerment of women and girls informal sector work and contraceptive use to ensure Sustainable Development.”

We express gratitude to the Government of Canada for their generous donation and support and to the UN Women and UNFPA teams who have continued to support the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica and the region by extension on social protection, gender, economic growth and many other issues.

Thank you for making time to be with us as we launch the BBE project here in  
Dominica.

Once again, welcome all