

REMARKS DELIVERED BY UN WOMEN MCO CARIBBEAN PROGRAMME
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REGIONAL WORKSHOP: CHILD AND GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING -
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This workshop is an important step in the UN Joint Programme “Enhancing Equity: Social Protection Floor for Poor and Disadvantaged Women, Men, Boys and Girls in Barbados and the OECS”. This programme was developed in direct response to the impact of the 2008 – 2011 economic and financial crisis which threatened to erode the significant investments and Eastern Caribbean countries have made in social development.

Poverty in the Caribbean and everywhere else is a gendered issue; that is, it impacts and effects men and women quite differently. Understanding the specific ways in which women and men, boys and girls experience poverty is critical if policies and actions aimed at reducing poverty are to be effective.

The evidence is before us, **Caribbean governments have and continue to make significant investment in social development.** This meeting is further evidence of that investment as well the region having met and exceeded several Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Member States of the OECS are signatories to the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Convention) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and have committed to supporting the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action - to date a landmark roadmap for gender equality. 2015 is also the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action as well as the culmination point for a number of global processes which will define future development.

At the 59th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March 2015, Ministers and Representatives of Governments pledged to take concrete action to close the resource gap in financing gender equality commitments as articulated in the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW, through mobilisation of financial resources, including domestic resource mobilisation and official development assistance (ODA) to build on progress achieved and ensure both domestic and ODA resources are used effectively to contribute to realising the Beijing goals.

Why do we say this meeting is an important step? It is because significant progress has been made whereby Social Protection Policy frameworks have or are being developed. Institutional and operational reforms are taking place. However there is the ever present challenge of ensuring adequate financing of gender equality commitments and children's rights within the social protection system. Examples of gender-responsive measures can include employment-guarantee policies, provision of care services, cash-transfer programmes, non-contributory old-age pensions, designed based on gender analysis.

This is a challenge given high debt to GDP ratios within the eastern Caribbean region. This is why together we are doing this work, to find a means to ensure that measures toward sovereign debt restructuring do not disproportionately impact women and their families and increase gender inequalities.

The principles of equity, including gender equity remains an obligation. The term equality does not necessarily imply "same" or identical treatment. Poor people, for example will need more social assistance support than rich people. Children will need different and specific support from adults. Women will have different needs from men. Services should be designed with these differences in mind and budgetary allocations and expenditures should reflect these differences.

At the CARICOM Level, the Caribbean Joint Statement on Gender Equality and the Post 2015 and Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) Agenda represents Caribbean voices and expectations in the emerging Post 2015 and SIDS global agendas as it relates to gender equality. With the support of the UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean, the Joint Statement was generated by high level government officials and civil society representatives from CARICOM countries, with inputs from regional inter-governmental bodies and international partners in the Caribbean.

Within the Joint Statement, the point is made that analyses of economies continue to demonstrate that there are significant differences in women's and men's access to economic opportunities and in the power they exert over existing economic structures in society. It is also recognised that measures that enhance and secure the financial independence of women; promote their equal participation; and, provide socio-economic protections that would reduce poverty and inequality, would enhance the quality of life of the women and their families.

In September 2015 the UN General Assembly will be approving the Post-2015 Development Framework to include 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets. There is a Stand-alone Goal on Gender Equality. In parallel to the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 agenda, are the ongoing preparations and intergovernmental negotiations leading up to the 13th – 16th July 2015 [United Nations Third Conference on Financing for Development](#) to take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. At this conference The UN member states, including Eastern Caribbean countries are expected to agree on joint commitments on financing for sustainable development and the post-2015 agenda.

The allocation and expenditure of the requisite resources needed to ensure that social protection programmes and services in the Eastern Caribbean are child and gender responsive, bring us closer to meeting global Gender Equality agreements and commitments in the SDGs to be approved in September 2015.

And so we encourage Member States to continue to use your Caribbean Joint Statement on Gender Equality and the Post 2015 and Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) Agenda, to advocate for, to be sure that the “asks”, priorities and perspective contained in the Joint Statement are heard in the lead up to and in the negotiations at these global fora – the [United Nations Third Conference on Financing for Development](#) as well as the General Assembly in September.

