



Building a Coordinated Caribbean position for CSW65
Remarks delivered by the UN Women MCO-Caribbean Representative –
Ms. Tonni Brodber
8 February 2021

- The Hon. Penelope Beckles, Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Trinidad and Tobago
- The Hon. Dr Vindhya Persaud, Minister of Human Services and Social Security, Guyana
- The Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House of Representative of Trinidad and Tobago, and Vice-President of ParlAmericas
- Senator the Hon. Ranard Henfield, The Bahamas
- Ms. Roberta Clarke, Regional Director (ag), UN Women Eastern and Southern Africa
- Ms. Tonni Brodber, Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean
- Dr. Hilary Brown, Programme Manager, Culture and Community Development, CARICOM Secretariat
- Dr. Tonya Haynes, Institute for Gender and Development Studies, Nita Barrow Unit, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill
- Ms. Ann-Marie Williams, Deputy Programme Manager, Gender and Development, Human and Social Development, CARICOM Secretariat

- Lady Anande Trotman-Joseph, President of the CIWiL Regional Board of Directors
- Dr. Rosina Wiltshire, Gender and Development Specialist, CIWiL Regional Board Member
- NGMs and CSOs

We're just about 10 years away from 2030, when we fully evaluate our progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. There are 17 SDGs, the goals are all interrelated, interconnected and interdependent. So while Goal 5, is a stand-alone goal on Gender equality and women's empowerment. All of the other 16 SDGs include targets related to Gender equality.

Goal 5 contains 6 targets:

Target 5.1. End all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere

Target 5.2. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

Target 5.3. Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

Target 5.4. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

Target 5.5. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

Target 5.6. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

This year's CSW theme serves as a reminder that Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life target 5.5., is required for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and it is also a critical factor for the elimination of violence.

It should come as no surprise that countries with higher levels of gender equality have higher levels of sustainable development. It is because gender equality and substantive equality, that is equality under the law, but also the lived experience of equality, leads to and is a prerequisite for sustainable development. Substantive equality speaks not only to equality under the law, but also to the lived experience of equality.

It would seem that at the root of gender inequality is the root of all social injustice. It is the belief that based on a biological or social categorization, some people should have increased opportunities and access to resources, more than others. We may infuse reason in these divisions but what is meant is that enough for one group, is not the same for another. This kind of thinking has never boded well for humanity, whether it is applied to race, class, caste or sex, no matter what is used to justify it..... you have done well 'enough', women have done well enough, there are enough of you in politics. It is the belief that it is a zero-sum game; that if women do well then men will fall behind. It is the spoken or unspoken assumption that certain injustices are normal or natural for some groups. Rape, intimate partner violence, slavery. This belief drives the fear of change when the playing field becomes more equal and equitable, it feels like oppression for some, it fuels "whataboutism". When yet another woman's body is found after being raped and discarded without thought for her humanity, her dreams, her life, it drives the diminishing of the horror of that situation and others like it, with the statements that 'men experience violence too'. It is the simplification of the systemic issues that tries to position this violence into a tit for tat rather than an understanding that patriarchy and toxic masculinity are a live and direct threat to both women and men.

So why women's leadership? As societies shift to make space for all of its people to live full public and personal lives, we all benefit.

Women's leadership is a human right as embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other critical international standards. The human rights approach speaks to the fact that women should be in leadership because they represent half of the population. The global standard is for at least 30% of women to be in leadership. The reasoning behind this is that 30% of any group is what is called a critical mass to effect change AND for the change to transform oppressive systems like the systemic issues that drive violence in our societies.

There are characteristics often aligned with femininity and womanhood which were once and unfortunately in some pockets still viewed as unsuitable for leadership, such as nurturance, sensitivity, sweetness, supportiveness, gentleness, warmth, cooperativeness, expressiveness, humility, empathy, affection, tenderness. More and more these characteristics are deemed necessary for leadership among men and women. So, I suppose in this way we need more influence of the so-called feminine in leadership. This feminine often comes from women but also from men, these characteristics are those of servant leaders like a Nelson

Mandela. This is but one of a myriad reason for increasing the numbers of women in leadership.

Therefore, it is numbers AND it is about systems and people, - that are transformational, inclusive and equitable. It is about a critical mass AND it is also about leadership that recognises that power lies in decisions made and acknowledges how social and economic vulnerabilities collide to make one person of the same sex or gender identity experience oppression in very different ways than another.

While there are examples of women in decision-making in political life who for whatever reason replicate principles associated with inequality, there are also many women who demonstrate transformational leadership. Leaders that challenge the beliefs, practices and structures of all inequality.

Women who prioritise decision-making on reforming and removing sex and gender-based discriminatory systems and practices, often times do so as a result of their unique perspective as women, whether it be ending female genital mutilation, promoting racial equality and/or women's reproductive rights and freedoms. These are women who continue to reach out and support other women's rise, illuminated by the knowledge that another's light does not diminish theirs but together their lights blaze a trail towards equality. These women use their light to keep us all honest,

aware of our flaws, the gaps within ourselves and our broader communities and the need to collaborate in implementing solutions. There are men who do the same, and the SDGs will not be achieved without them either. These people are transformational. They are not perfect, they are aware of their flaws and aspire continuously to the principles and values of equity, equality, democracy, justice, caring, non-violence and cooperation. The process leads to the redefinition of power and power relations and the strengthening of leadership that is bold and innovative and builds on the skills of women and men in society.

I have been born privileged in many ways, one being, like many I was born to a woman and man who aspired to transformational leadership. I have witnessed and been taught and led by women who aspired to transformational leadership and believed deeply in equality for all from Alison McLean, who is gone but not forgotten, to our next speaker Roberta Clarke.

Roberta Clarke is the acting Regional Director of the UN Women Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa; her achievements are many. Roberta is a fierce advocate for women's rights and laser focused on equality and justice. It has been an honour to see how she does the work that often wears at the very fabric of your being while ensuring there is space for others. It is inspirational and motivational. She is always honest,

at times strident, and all that she asks of others, she does of herself. Both Alison and Roberta drove our organisation to ensure that whatever we did had purpose. This is why it is so fitting that Roberta shares with us the role of these intergovernmental processes and why they matter, why women's leadership matters and how it can and must contribute to ending violence. So, without further ado I would like to invite Roberta Clarke to share her remarks.