



Caribbean Regional Colloquium on Women Leaders as Agents of Change
Hilton Hotel, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
28-30 June 2011

Port-of-Spain Consensus on Transformational Leadership for Gender Equality

1. Under the leadership of the Honourable Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and in partnership with the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWiL), the Caribbean Regional Colloquium on “Women Leaders as Agents of Change” was held at the Hilton Hotel, Trinidad and Tobago on 29-30th June 2011. This Colloquium was supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat, Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).
2. Attended by parliamentarians, ministers of government, representatives of local government, political parties, national gender/women’s machineries, women’s organisations, academia, regional and international organisations, participants discussed the status of women in Caribbean political leadership.
3. The meeting reflected that countries in the English-speaking Caribbean enjoy robust democratic traditions, characterised by parliamentary elections, relatively high levels of voter participation, and the peaceful transfer of power.
4. Women’s political participation is now recognised internationally as a key element in fostering genuine democracy and social progress. Yet, despite high levels of participation by women as voters and campaigners, relatively few women are selected by political parties for leadership positions or as candidates to contest parliamentary elections, and even fewer are elected as members of parliament. Most Caribbean countries have fewer than 15% women as elected parliamentarians.
5. There is a similar inequality in women occupying ministerial positions and seats in public and private sector boardrooms.
6. As a result, the Caribbean lacks a critical mass of women political leaders committed to promoting gender equality in areas such as women’s economic empowerment and security, ending gender-based violence, advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights, equal pay for work of equal value, and shared family responsibilities.
7. Participants agreed women’s equal political participation is a fundamental human right and contributes to social cohesion, security and sustainable economic development.
8. Women’s achievement of 30% of seats in national parliaments is specified in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 as an indicator of progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment.



9. Caribbean countries are currently experiencing an economic downturn linked to the global fiscal crisis, high indebtedness, the collapse of traditional industries such as sugar, bananas and bauxite and limited economic diversification. Increasing levels of criminality, insecurity and violence, including gender-based violence threaten individual and collective peace and security.

10. Caribbean democratic development requires transformational leadership that values equality, equity, non-violence, caring, cooperation, service, transparency and accountability, and zero tolerance for corruption in political and public life.

11. The meeting endorsed the definition of women's transformational leadership offered in the Colloquium Background Paper, as follows:

Women with a vision of social justice, individually and collectively transforming themselves to use their power, resources and skills in non-oppressive, inclusive structures and processes to mobilise others around a shared agenda of social, cultural, economic and political transformation for equality and the realisation of human rights for all.

12. Participants strongly urged the political participation of the full diversity of women reflecting ethnicity, age, socio-economic status, dis/abilities, rural/urban location and sexual identity.

13. The Colloquium congratulated CIWiL on its formation and endorsed the work on capacity building, mentoring, advocacy and policy advice.

14. In order to increase the numbers of women in political leadership acting as change agents, the meeting recommended as follows:

15. Governments should:

- Increase women's representation in cabinet, parliament and local government to a minimum of 30%, and where this has already been achieved, strive for parity or 50%;
- Review the criteria and processes for appointments to decision-making bodies in the public and private sectors to facilitate increased women's representation;
- Offer gender-sensitive leadership training programmes for men and women, (including with young people) who are preparing to assume or are in decision-making positions in the public and private sectors;
- Promote shared family responsibilities between women and men to increase women's participation in public life;
- Ensure that rules governing parliament provide for adequate maternity/paternity leave;
- Strengthen national gender/women's machineries for effective implementation, monitoring and mainstreaming of national, regional and international commitments on gender equality;
- Ensure gender-responsive national budgets and development plans;
- Strengthen economic governance by linking debt reduction, stimulation of growth and the achievement of other macro-economic targets with measures that support women's productive capacities and social protection; and



- Undertake economic diversification towards service sectors such as creative/ technological industries, ensuring women's equal participation.

16. Political parties should:

- Set targets of at least 40% of either sex on the lists of candidates for parliamentary and local government elections and senatorial appointments;
- Review governance processes to identify and address impediments to internal party democracy;
- Develop and implement initiatives that facilitate women to participate fully in all internal policy-making structures, and appointment and electoral nominating processes;
- Examine party structures and implement procedures to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against women's participation and leadership;
- Strengthen and support mechanisms to engender women's and youth participation.

17. CIWiL, in collaboration with governments, political parties, women's and civil society organisations and the media, should:

- Promote transformational leadership as a prerequisite for Caribbean development;
- Advocate at all levels to enable women to influence political, economic and social systems and processes, and seek accountability from elected representatives on their commitment to gender equality;
- Build and strengthen solidarity among the diversity of Caribbean women through media outreach and partnerships, information, education and sensitisation activities.

18. The participants committed themselves to further the realization of these recommendations individually and through their institutions for the advancement of social justice and equitable societies.