



CARICOM Statement  
Preparatory to CSW65

**“Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.”**

February 2021

This document has been drafted in 2021 within the context of the 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65), which will focus on the priority theme of women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. It provides the basis for a shared CARICOM position on the theme.

We, the Member States of CARICOM, having met on 12 February 2021, with the participation of civil society and relevant stakeholders, reaffirm our commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. This can only be achieved through women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, the empowerment of all women and girls and a broad alliance of people, governments, civil society and the private sector all working together to build the future we want for present and future generations. As such:

1. We reaffirm the commitments we have made at United Nations conferences and summits such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the declarations adopted by the Commission on the occasion of the tenth, fifteenth, twentieth and twenty-fifth anniversaries of the Fourth World Conference on Women.
2. We reiterate that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as other relevant conventions and treaties, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belem Do Para), provide a legal framework and a comprehensive set of measures for realizing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all women and girls, throughout their life cycle.
3. We reaffirm that the promotion and protection of, and respect for, the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women and girls, including the right to development, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, are crucial for women's economic empowerment and should be mainstreamed into all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty and women's economic empowerment. We also reaffirm the need to implement measures to ensure that every person is entitled to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, and that equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the promotion, protection and full realization of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.
4. We recognise that Caribbean SIDS face unique challenges to sustaining high levels of economic growth and job creation has been affected by the ongoing adverse impacts of the global economic crisis worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, declining foreign direct investment, trade imbalances, increased indebtedness, the lack of adequate transportation, energy and information and communications technology infrastructure networks, limited human and institutional capacity and the inability to integrate effectively into the global economy. The growth prospects of the small island developing States have also been hindered by other factors, including climate change, the impact of natural disasters, the high cost of imported energy and the degradation of coastal and marine ecosystems and sea-level rise. (Samoa Pathway 23)

5. We recall that CEDAW legally binds all States Parties to fulfill, protect and respect women's human rights, which means that States are responsible for eliminating discrimination that is perpetuated in the public and private sphere by public authorities and State actors as well as private individuals and organisations.
6. We express concern that Post Beijing +25, women are yet to live in an equal world, free of all forms of violence against them with access to decent work, social protection and where their leadership skills are fully utilised and valued amidst a widening income gap and growing economic inequality.
7. We recognize that while there has been progress in the increased number of women elected or appointed to decision-making positions and while gender quotas can substantially contributed to women's representation in national and local legislatures, progress is too slow and full gender parity is far from being reached at all levels of the executive and legislative branches of government and the public sector. (Based on E/CN.6/2021/3, para 9 and 16)
8. We express concern that the COVID-19 pandemic is rolling back the limited progress made toward the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and that the effects of the pandemic are compounding existing obstacles to women's participation and decision-making in public life. (Based on E/CN.6/2021/3, para 6 and 9)
9. We express concern that women remain significantly underrepresented in all aspects of decision-making and that violence against women in public life is widespread, while organized opposition to women's participation in public life is sometimes strong and violent. We note that failure to expedite women's participation and decision-making in public life and the elimination of violence against women will make it impossible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. (Based on E/CN.6/2021/3, para 3 and 7)
10. We recognise the need to implement international and national commitments and norms, including through temporary special measures, create more enabling environments and institutional systems, eliminate violence against women in public life and strengthen the voice, agency, participation and leadership of women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, to reach equality in participation and decision-making in public life. (Based on E/CN.6/2021/3, para 4)
11. We emphasise that all people have an equal right to participate in their country's government through public office and informal leadership, that it is necessary to address inequality between men and women in the sharing of power, and that women's equal access to and full participation in decision-making, including in the private sector, is a critical strategy for achieving gender equality. (Based on E/CN.6/2021/3, para 2)
12. We acknowledge the important contributions made by women's organizations to promote legislation and mechanisms to advance gender equality, eliminate laws that are discriminatory against women and increase women's inclusion in public life. (Based on E/CN.6/2021/3, para 30)
13. We acknowledge the benefit of implementing family-oriented policies aimed at, inter alia, achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, the full participation and decision-making of women in public life, work-family

balance and the self-sufficiency of the family unit and recognizes the need to ensure that all social and economic development policies are responsive to the changing needs and expectations of families in fulfilling their numerous functions and that the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of all family members are respected. (Based on CSW Agreed Conclusions)

14. We acknowledge that violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, persistent, and devastating human rights violations in the Caribbean region today and by extension the world. It occurs worldwide, cutting across all generations, nationalities, communities and spheres of our societies, regardless of inter alia, race, colour, creed, ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality and or disability. It is a violation to the fulfilment of women's and girls' human rights and to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
15. We condemn violence against women and girls which is rooted in historical and structural inequality of power relations between women and men. It is intrinsically linked to gender stereotypes that underlie and perpetuate such violence, as well as other factors such as multidimensional poverty and limited or lack of access to justice, effective legal remedies and services, including protection, rehabilitation and reintegration; and to health-care services, especially sexual and reproductive services that can increase women's and girls' vulnerability to such violence.
16. We reaffirm the call for the development of comprehensive approaches to the prevention of violence, especially by addressing structural and underlying causes of such violence, transforming social norms, strengthening and developing appropriate education programs, working through media to eliminate gender stereotypes and conducting awareness raising campaigns.
17. We also express concern that women politicians as well as women voters, candidates and election administrators in the Caribbean have faced targeted, gender-based violence in elections, intended to stop women from accessing power and limit their perspectives in policy formulation. (Based on E/CN.6/2021/3, para 40)
18. We note that the 2019 CARICOM/CDB *Programme Needs Assessment of National Gender Mechanisms* cites GBV as an area where much work has been done as an important priority in CARICOM Member States yet, some significant gaps remain.
19. We are concerned about gender inequality and related gaps in the information and communications technology sectors. Women and girls are increasingly at risk of losing out on ICT job opportunities, whether in the public or private sectors. This is especially so within the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Current and emerging technology has fundamentally altered the job market, shaping the 'future of work' and the skills that will be required for those jobs. Women's demonstrated low participation in STEM professions globally and in CARICOM, where the new jobs are expected to be created, put them at risk to slip even further behind. Estimates show that women will gain only one STEM-related job for every 20 jobs lost in other areas, whereas men will gain one new job for every four lost elsewhere (UNWOMEN). Responding to these challenges and opportunities, CARICOM has instituted a CARICOM Girls in ICT partnership in 2020, with regional, international partners and Member States to illuminate and treat with these issues in a holistic manner. The partnership's action plan and work can only be successful, however, with strategic mobilisation of resources and support from international development partners, venture capitalists and developed countries.

20. We recognize that advancing gender equality and mainstreaming gender in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) requires that persisting gender inequalities which impact the region be concertedly addressed. The CSME Regional Synthesis Report (2015) indicated that pre-existing conditions, including patriarchal systems of social and economic organisation and culturally-reinforced attitudes in relation to the roles and responsibilities of women and men, effectively hinder the achievement of social and economic development outcomes. Dismantling these structures are in the best interest of men and women and by extension families, as each measure to address gender inequality systemically serves to benefit the achievements of regional integration.
21. We are concerned about slow or stagnant economic growth and development, the rising inequalities within and among countries, volatile food and energy prices, insufficient investment in development coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the residual effects of the world financial and economic crises, especially in fragile tourism-dependent economies. We are also concerned about access to potable water, water scarcity, epidemics, demographic changes, and rapid urbanization of populations, unsustainable fisheries practices and use of marine resources, natural hazards, disasters and environmental degradation, continuing food and energy insecurity, the increasing challenges caused by humanitarian emergencies, displacement, violence (armed conflicts) and the adverse impacts of climate change all of which exacerbate the disadvantages, vulnerabilities and inequalities that women, particularly rural and indigenous peoples and their families face and which the pandemic has laid bare.
22. We recognize that rural women nurture and sustain entire nations and need specific resources to support their work and wellbeing. As the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged our lives, psyche, and economies, rural women have been leading, often hidden from the limelight, in sustaining and reviving their communities.
23. We recognize that there can be no sustainable development without empowering the 1.7 billion women and girls who live in rural areas across the globe and face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination daily. Empowering rural women does more than benefit the women themselves – it benefits their families and communities as well (SDG 1,2,3,5, 10,11).
24. We are cognizant that they too face added risk of insufficient infrastructure and services. As COVID-19 pushes thousands of unemployed migrant workers to return to rural communities, the pressure on land and resources coupled with the gender gaps in agriculture will force wider food security gaps.
25. We note the vulnerability, marginalization and discrimination faced by Indigenous women.
26. We commend the Member States that have already undertaken relevant gender-responsive budgeting preparatory initiatives, such as Parliamentary Seminars, Cabinet discussions and capacity building training.
27. We confirm that GRB is a fundamental gender equity provision, intrinsically linked to gender mainstreaming, and key to realizing gender equality, the implementation of CEDAW, and the achievement of SDG 5. As such, the new public financial management paradigm has to go beyond accurate and efficient accounting, making Ministries of Finance responsible for leading GRB initiatives by providing equitable resourcing on a continuum through public state financing.

28. We emphasize that it is crucial that governments, businesses and other stakeholders understand the multi-dimensional and differential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the socio-economic crisis it has created for both women and men workers and design both gender-responsive and sustainable policies to build back equal. Failure to do so would exacerbate pre-existing inequalities and hamper the social and economic sustainability of all women and girls.
29. We note the impact of COVID-19 on women who are seeking work is worsened due to underlying challenges including discrimination and sexual harassment, wage gaps as well as unevenly shared unpaid care and family obligations which expose them to violence at both the level of the household and the work place. We recognize that investments in and the provision of equitable, inclusive, quality, accessible and affordable early childhood education and child care services are crucial in enabling women to enter and remain in the labour market. UNECLAC warns that 118 million women and girls in Latin America and the Caribbean could fall deeper into poverty owing to the effects of the Pandemic.
30. We note that the climate crisis is a direct consequence of the present “growth model” and the Caribbean is one of the world’s most vulnerable regions to Climate Change and Global Warming.
31. We commit to addressing climate change in keeping with Climate Action (SDG 13), taking into account the Paris Climate Agreement that acknowledges respect for the promotion and consideration of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and intergenerational equity.
32. We recall the adoption of a gender action plan by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at its Twenty-Third Session and reaffirm the Gender Action Plan which acknowledges the necessity for every person, including women and girls, of present and future generations to have access to an environment adequate for their health and well-being (SDG 3) and the critical importance of ensuring such access for the empowerment of women and girls (SDG 5) and the sustainable development and resilience of communities (SDG 11).
33. We recognize the important role of sustainable development in averting the loss and damage associated with the effects of climate change and in reducing the risk of loss and damage, especially for women and girls in vulnerable situations, as well as the active role of women as agents of change in safeguarding the environment.
34. We acknowledge that women typically spend disproportionately more time on unpaid care work than men. On account of gendered social norms that view unpaid care work as a woman’s responsibility, women across different regions, socio-economic classes and cultures spend a significant part of their day meeting the expectations of their domestic and reproductive roles, in addition to their income earning activities, thus creating the “double burden” of work for women.
35. We note that the gender gap in unpaid care work has significant implications for women’s ability to actively take part in the labour market and the type/quality of employment opportunities available to them. Time is a limited resource, which is divided between labour and leisure, productive and reproductive activities, paid and unpaid work. Every minute more that a woman spends on unpaid care work is one minute less that she could be potentially spending on market-related activities or investing in her educational and vocational skills.

36. We confirm that data is necessary in the region to allow for comparability between and among Member States and regions. Five Member States, namely Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago have all volunteered to include questions on measuring Unpaid Care and Domestic Work SDG indicator (5.4.1) in the 2022 round of censuses. Properly disaggregated, the data would inform policies and legislation while sensitizing the region about why UCDW should be valued and counted as part of the region's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Therefore we commit at all levels and as appropriate, to collaborate with the relevant entities of the United Nations system and international and regional organizations, within their respective mandates and bearing in mind national priorities, and invite civil society, inter alia, women's organizations, youth-led organizations, feminist groups, the private sector, national human rights institutions, where they exist, and other relevant stakeholders, as applicable, on the following actions: (Based on CSW Agreed Conclusions)

### ***Strengthen normative, legal and regulatory frameworks***

- Fully implement existing commitments and obligations with respect to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and the full and equal enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (a))
- Undertake comprehensive reforms to eliminate laws, policies and regulations that discriminate against women; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (b))
- Establish targets, action plans and timelines to achieve gender parity for all executive, legislative and administrative positions, as well as in public commissions, tasks forces and negotiations teams; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (c))
- Continue to appoint women to executive positions to form local and national gender parity cabinets; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (d))
- Adopt and effectively implement a range of regulations and temporary special measures for the public and private sectors to accelerate equal participation of women in decision-making and leadership, including for women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (f))
- Encourage the repeal or amendment of legal provisions that contribute to the shrinking of civic space and reduce women's organizations' abilities to register, engage in advocacy, receive external funding, and report on rights issues; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (g))
- Improve collection and use of globally comparable data, disaggregated by sex, age and other factors on women's participation and decision-making in public administration, the judiciary, political parties and other areas of political and public life; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (h))

### ***Prevent and Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls in Public and Private Life***

- Establish and provide multisectoral services, programmes and responses for women and girls subjected to violence.
- Reform legal frameworks to criminalize violence against women in political and public life, both online and offline, and to end impunity; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (i))
- Build the capacity of law enforcement personnel, prosecutors and judges to apply laws on violence against women, respond to incidents, and hold perpetrators accountable; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (j))
- Allocate resources for coordinated essential services including psycho-educational interventions based on perpetrator accountability and victim safety, legal aid, health

care, psychosocial support services, counselling, women's shelters, 24-hour hotlines, one-stop crisis centres, child services, survivor's funds, as well as assistance, protection and support through access to long-term accommodation, educational, employment, economic opportunities as well as specialist services, establish and ensure access to complaints and reporting mechanisms for survivors of violence; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (k))

- Allocate resources for training, prevention, and essential services to eliminate violence against women in political and public life; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (l))
- Ensure that women human rights defenders, members of women's organizations and feminist movements are protected from violence for engaging in public life; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (m))
- Continue to resource international and regional human rights mechanisms and special procedures to monitor, report and provide recommendations on violence against women in public and political life; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (n))
- Set standards on what constitutes online violence against women in public life to be able to hold media, and companies who run social media platforms, accountable for removing such content; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (o)) (p)
- Improve the evidence base to collect data, track trends and share data cross sectorally on violence against women by increasing the capacity of national statistical systems to collect data on violence against women in public and private life (both online and offline) regularly and systematically; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (p)) to better inform the development of laws, policies and awareness-raising efforts to eliminate GBV, which affects one in three women globally and one in two women in the Caribbean.

### ***Strengthen gender-responsive institutional reforms***

- Implement gender responsive budgeting (GRB), bringing together the inter-related issues of gender equality and public finance, to integrate socio-economic dimensions into the process of budget planning and financing as has been recommended since the Beijing Conference, articulated in CEDAW and related conventions ratified by CARICOM Member States.
- Incorporate gender equality principles into all stages of the budget process and Ministries of Finance must lead the process of achieving gender equality and the relevant socio-economic impact through fiscal policy.
- Support transformational policy responses to reduce poverty in rural areas that can assist in building rural women's ability to cope with future shocks. These include, but are not limited to addressing women's unequal access to land and productive resources and supporting their engagement in higher-value agricultural activities such as cash crop production. Rural women are especially vulnerable since their agricultural activities have been affected to an even greater extent than those of men. Yet, despite the difficulties, rural women are showing their resilience in the face of the crisis and their work is proving crucial to preventing hunger and improving food security.
- Ensure gender-sensitive approaches to COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery by appointing women and gender equality advocates to leadership positions through gender parity targets for relevant task forces, standing committees and other decision-making bodies; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (q))
- Resource specialized gender equality committees or commissions and women's caucuses, and networking forums, as well as institutional capacity-building on gender equality in parliaments, ministries and public administration; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (r))
- Ensure that all public institutions have in place, and comply with, codes of conduct that establish zero tolerance for violence, discrimination and abuse, and internal reporting and complaints mechanisms; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (s))



- Ratify and put into force the ILO Convention (No. 190) on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (t))
- Increase transparency in institutions and allow members of women's organizations and feminist movements access to debates and decision-making processes, to voice their opinions and share their expertise; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (u))
- Increase the availability of high-quality financing in support of women's participation in public life;
- Create conditions and incentives for women candidates' campaigns to be financially supported by public and private funds, including through gender-sensitive political financing, subsidies for childcare, fundraising networks and non-partisan crowdfunding and endowments; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (v))
- Incentivize political parties to finance women's campaigns and promote their leadership; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (w))
- Raise the percentage of official development assistance funds that go to standalone gender equality targets and women's organizations; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (x))
- Increase the quality and quantity of funding available to support women in public life through the creation and financing of specific funds that prioritize direct funding to women's organizations and feminist movements; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (y))

### ***Strengthen women's voice and leave no one behind in public life***

- Facilitate the entry of women into the political pipeline through capacity-building and training and awareness raising, and provide targeted support to women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination to participate in public life and politics; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (z)) Improvement in the condition, position and status of indigenous Women in all spheres, inclusive of decision-making roles, must be prioritised.
- Implement awareness raising measures and sensitize community and religious leaders, the media, men and boys and different generations of women to counter social norms that restrict women's rights and participation in public life and decision-making and to take deliberate action to adjust them; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (aa))
- Strengthen an enabling environment for women's participation in public life and decision-making by addressing women's poverty, unpaid care burden, unequal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, education and technology, and fostering skills-development; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (bb))
- Increase young women's representation and participation in public life through community outreach, mentoring, capacity development programmes and early exposure to legislative and policymaking spaces; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (cc))
- Incentivize media, advertising, film and television industries to reverse gender based discrimination in the portrayal of women leaders in public life and decision-making; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (dd))
- Fund and support public information campaigns with positive messages and images of women's role in public life to help change stereotypes; (E/CN.6/2021/3, para 65 (ee))

### ***Strengthen women's engagement in addressing the Climate Crisis***

- Adopt special measures taken to secure gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (SDG 5) and in keeping with all Conventions ratified by CARICOM Member States including upholding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- Learn from rural and indigenous women who, through their traditional knowledge and environmental stewardship, have over time sustained, conserved and managed the tropical rain forests and a range of other eco-systems, which significantly contribute to building a climate-resilient world for all (SDG 13).

- Include indigenous women and girls in decision-making generally, and specifically in terms of Climate Action as recognised in the UNDRIP, in the Gender Action Plan of the UNFCCC, in the SIDS SAMOA Declaration and in the UN Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP). Support REDD+ (countries' efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and foster conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks) initiatives in the CARICOM region. Present opportunities for women, in particular rural and indigenous women, across generations, to occupy key climate leadership, management, monitoring and research positions at community and national levels.
- Develop and implement support packages so as to mitigate negative effects on women by providing support to businesses and preserving jobs, preventing further layoffs, protecting incomes and leaving no one behind while reaching the furthest behind first.
- Support women who work including the self-employed, own-account workers and “gig workers” and cultural performers and those in the creative industries whose seasonal entertainment work has been to a large extent cancelled because of COVID-19 physical distancing and other restrictions, whether in the formal or informal economy, whether paid or unpaid.
- Support the economic empowerment of women to enable more women to re-enter the workforce, aware that in some Member States, women make up almost half the workforce. CEDAW highlights the need to raise the labour force participation rates of women, economies grow faster when more women participate in the workforce, with equal pay for work of equal value. We commit to adopt policies to promote equal pay for work of equal value and, in addition to appropriate legislation, strengthen the data collection, data analysis and oversight required to implement it.
- Dedicate resources, including accessible healthcare facilities and services and the provision of cash transfers, to rural women and their communities.
- Call on employers to apply a transformative gender lens to address retrenchment and closure practices as well as women’s disproportionate unpaid care obligations so they can return to work as factories and retailers resume operations. Efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic should account for the unique ways that women and men may encounter the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic at work, at home and in their communities.

In conclusion, we recognize our primary role as duty bearers for the follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and stresses that it is critical to address and integrate gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls throughout national, regional and global reviews of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to ensure synergies between the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action and the gender-responsive follow-up to the 2030 Agenda. (Based on CSW Agreed Conclusions)

We call upon the United Nations system entities, within their respective mandates, and other relevant international financial institutions and multi-stakeholder platforms to support Member States, upon their request, in their efforts to ensure women’s full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. (Based on CSW Agreed Conclusions)

We call upon the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to continue to play a central role in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and in supporting Governments and national women’s machineries, upon their request, in coordinating the United Nations system and in mobilizing civil society, the private sector, employers’ organizations and trade unions, and other relevant stakeholders, at all levels, in support of the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive

implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. (Based on CSW Agreed Conclusions)

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### **Reader's Note**

The introductory paragraphs in this CARICOM draft reaffirm existing commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. It highlights the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its outcome documents along with several regional documents and commitments and their linkages to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It emphasizes that based on this year's theme, violence nullifies women's right to participate at the highest decision-making levels, and that violence against women and girls must be addressed in multisectoral ways if as a region we're to eliminate violence and achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdown which has disproportionately affected women in myriad of ways, such as an increase in GBV, loss of jobs, food insecurity, and the undue burden of care are also addressed and reinforce the need for gender-responsive approaches in the recovery process in order to build back equal.

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