



THEME

Transformational Leadership for Gender Equality in the Caribbean: Regional Strategies and Partnerships

LOCATION

Bridgetown, Barbados

DATE

November 19-20, 2018

PARTICIPANTS

More than 60 parliamentarians, ministers, representatives from multilaterals, national gender machinery, civil society and political organisations from 18 countries and territories over the two days of activities



This activity aligned with SDGs 5 and 17.

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGES AND BRIEFINGS WITH GENDER EQUALITY ADVOCATES

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ParlAmericas, in collaboration with the UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean, the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWIL), CARICOM, and the Commonwealth Secretariat, and with the support of the Parliament of Barbados, organised the meeting [Transformational Leadership for Gender Equality in the Caribbean: Regional Strategies and Partnerships](#). The two days of activities convened parliamentarians, ministers, representatives from multilaterals, national gender machinery, and civil society and political organisations to take stock of current initiatives in the region to advance women's leadership and gender equality, and to develop strategies to mainstream this focus in national sustainable development efforts. Through a series of dynamic exchanges, the participants forged strengthened partnerships and more coordinated agendas. They also participated in knowledge sharing, providing input for a forthcoming **CARICOM Regional Gender Equality Strategy**.



The materials from this meeting and other relevant resources on the topics discussed are available on the ParlAmericas website.

Day 1: Opening Ceremony

The meeting was officially opened with welcoming remarks by Ms. **Alison McLean**, Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean; Lady **Anande Trotman-Joseph**, Chair, CIWiL; the Honourable **Robert Nault**, Member of Parliament of Canada and President of ParlAmericas; and His Honour **Arthur Holder**, Speaker of the House of Assembly of Barbados and member of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors. Ms. **Tonni Brodber**, Deputy Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean, served as M.C. of the Opening Ceremony, offering a series of reflections that connected the remarks of each speaker to current events and development priorities.

“It is very clear to me and others that in order to be successful, men and women must work together to build the inclusive societies that we strive for. We need to defend the equal rights of women as human rights – the inequality of women and girls hurts all of us, men and boys included.”



The Honourable **Robert Nault**,
Member of Parliament (Canada)
and President of ParlAmericas



His Honour **Arthur E. Holder**, Speaker
of the House of Assembly of
Barbados and member of the
ParlAmericas Board of Directors

“The Parliament of Barbados is most pleased to support this meeting, which brings together many of our neighbours from the hemisphere. It is an opportunity to exchange on the parliamentary actions that can assist in the advancement of women’s rights and political leadership, for a future based on equality and prosperity.”



Lady **Anande Trotman-Joseph**,
Chair of the CIWiL Board of
Directors

“The agenda for women must be seen and must be heard. And this agenda must not be about, or for, the few but the many.”



Alison McLean, Representative,
UN Women Multi-Country Office
– Caribbean

“Let us continue to aspire, gather data and experiences, monitor and evaluate our gains, share our experience, ask for support and guidance where needed, [and] agree on our master plan and strategies which focus on realising sustainable equality, peace, and prosperity in our Caribbean, for all our peoples.”



“There can be no sustainable development that precludes the progress of women. There can be no sustainable development that is premised on discrimination. There can be no sustainable development that precludes opportunity...

Discussions about gender make people uncomfortable in a way that it shouldn't. Discussions about gender cause people to feel that you're trying claim turf in a way that it shouldn't. Discussions about gender fundamentally ought to be about partnership; that's all it is. It's about partnership and it's about opportunity and it's about ridding ourselves of discriminatory practices wherever they find themselves... We have to master [that conversation] in our contexts...

I leave you today simply with the commitment that I have not come to be the first [woman prime minister]. I have come to make sure that I will not be the last.”

FEATURE ADDRESS

The [feature address](#) was delivered by **the Honourable Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados**. In her candid remarks, the Prime Minister shared reflections on the meaning of sustainable development and its relationship to women's empowerment. She referenced current global challenges which indicate that progress cannot be taken for granted, as the gains that have been made are not translating at the community level or reaching all members of society. Prime Minister Mottley drew attention to the important work of disrupting gender norms in society and within political parties. She called on parliamentarians to use their positions of power and choice to have a positive impact on individuals' lives, and to have the difficult conversations about gender that are necessary to push the development agenda forward together.



Working Session: Priorities for a Regional Gender Equality Strategy

The first session of the meeting was a **multi-stakeholder consultation** to gather legislative and other input for CARICOM's forthcoming Regional Gender Equality Strategy.

After an introduction to the session by Ms. **Lebrechtta Nana Oye Hesse-Bayne** (CIWiL), Ms. **Tonni Brodber** (UN Women) spoke to the timely nature of the forthcoming Strategy, with reference to its important connection to the [commitments](#) made by countries of the region and their national reporting obligations in relation to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women ([CEDAW](#)).

Ms. **Ann-Marie Williams** (CARICOM) then gave a presentation on the process that CARICOM's gender desk is leading to develop the Regional Gender Equality Strategy. She reviewed some of the challenges to gender equality being experienced in the region, among them, intimate partner violence, youth unemployment, high rates of teenage pregnancy, gender stereotyping, insufficient access to sexual and reproductive health services, and prevalence of non-communicable diseases. Ms. Williams noted that the overall goal of the forthcoming Strategy is to accelerate the effective implementation of priority actions in support of gender equality through a coordinated regional approach that aligns with existing international and national frameworks.

Participants then rotated through discussion tables to provide feedback on gender-responsive approaches to the following priority topics that will be addressed in the Strategy: 1) **Good governance and political participation**, 2) **Freedom from violence**, 3) **Access to health services**, 4) **Social protection and inclusion**, 5) **Economic empowerment**, and 6) **Climate resilience**. This part of the session was facilitated by Ms. **Alisha Todd** (ParlAmericas), and the six individual discussions were hosted by members of the **CIWiL Board of Directors** along with representatives from **national gender machinery** from Caribbean countries.

During their table discussions, participants shared key challenges, good practices in their countries, relevant legislative frameworks, and other parliamentary actions that could be taken to contribute to progress on that issue, as well as the resources needed to implement effective solutions.

Some of the recurrent recommendations shared during the report-back included the need for **gender-responsive budgeting** and **strong systems and systematic approaches** to the issues identified. The importance of **inclusive and quality education** was also emphasised across the priority areas discussed, which is contemplated as a pillar of the forthcoming Strategy.

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION WITH NATIONAL GENDER MACHINERY REPRESENTATIVES

On the second day of the meeting, the representatives of national gender machinery held a strategic planning session, organised by CARICOM and UN Women. This session took place in parallel to the parliamentary briefings by partner organisations described in the pages that follow. Towards the end of the session, Ms. **Farmala Jacobs**, from the Directorate of Gender Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda, and Mr. **Adel Lilly**, from the Gender Affairs Bureau in Guyana, joined the parliamentary briefings to report on preliminary outcomes of their strategic planning. They detailed how the **outputs from the previous day's consultation on the forthcoming CARICOM Regional Gender Equality Strategy were informing their planning** as they further contribute to the development of this document and outline pathways for its implementation in their countries.



PRESENTATION OF CARICOM DRAFT STATEMENT ON SOCIAL PROTECTION

Prior to the close of the meeting, Ms. **Ann-Marie Williams** (CARICOM) gave a presentation on social protection systems, the **priority theme of the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** to take place in March 2019. She shared with participants the draft CARICOM statement, “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls,” that will be presented during CSW on behalf of all Caribbean countries in agreement with the text. She welcomed feedback and revisions to the draft statement from the meeting delegates.

Ms. Williams noted that in addition to the more standard functions of social protection – protective, preventative, and promotive – the CARICOM positioning of social protection aims to be transformative. In other words, it intends to not merely alleviate poverty, but to transform lives through the pursuit of policies that rebalance unequal power relations that cause vulnerabilities.



SPOTLIGHT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 17: PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

“A successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the centre, are needed at the global, regional, national and local level... National oversight mechanisms such as supreme audit institutions and oversight functions by legislatures should be strengthened.”

Source: [Goal 17](#), UN Sustainable Development Goals website
Further reading: “[Partnerships: Why They Matter](#),” *ibid*.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



High-Level Dialogue: Strategies and Partnerships to Promote Gender-Transformative Leadership and Meet National Development Priorities

The final session on the first day featured a [speech](#) by Her Excellency Dame **Billie Miller**, Ambassador Extraordinaire and Plenipotentiary of Barbados and Patron of CIWiL, on transformational leadership in the political sphere. Lady **Anande Trotman-Joseph** introduced Dame Billie Miller and moderated the dialogue with participants that followed the address.

Dame Billie Miller spoke about the importance of women's representation in electoral politics and the improved quality of democracy when women's perspectives are taken into account on all issues, not just those considered "women's issues." However, she flagged that there are persistent obstacles to women's participation, including economic barriers, competing obligations with care work, intersecting forms of discrimination based on race or class, and negative perceptions of politics.

In her view, the most persistent challenges emanate from within political parties, which are often dominated by men and traditional norms, values, and entitlements. These and other barriers, such as gender-biased media treatment, are also present after women enter politics.

In the dialogue that followed, participants shared their experiences finding support for women in politics and elevating women's voices and concerns through policy and decision-making. Dame Billie Miller advised that progress comes in peaks and valleys and will require sustained efforts. She said that she was filled with hope by the discussions being held and the partnerships being made.

A selection of Dame Billie Miller's recommendations and insights on advancing transformational leadership is summarised on the next page.





“In every region there are always women who defy the hurdles and the odds. The more women get elected to parliament, the more women will get elected to parliament. Every woman who is elected raises the consciousness and confidence of other women... Women are a high return investment which yields great dividends.”



Her Excellency Dame **Billie Miller**, Ambassador Extraordinaire and Plenipotentiary of Barbados and Patron of CIWiL

Drawing on her long career in politics -- including 18 years as the only woman in parliament in her country -- Dame Billie Miller called attention to various strategies that can help to break down the obstacles she mentioned during her remarks.

➔ MAKING POLITICAL PARTIES MORE INCLUSIVE

Dame Billie Miller highlighted **mentorship** as a crucial support mechanism for women as they enter politics and seek to advance in their parties, referencing CIWiL’s work in the region as an example of the benefits this strategy can yield. She also counselled “learning the politics within the politics of political parties,” and called on those already in leadership positions to commit to advancing women’s equal representation in politics. “In the end it is the leader who determines the team,” she stressed. This further connected to an overarching message in her remarks that it is not only women who should be responsible for gender-responsive work.

➔ INFLUENCING THE POLICY AGENDA

To have the greatest impact on issues of importance, Dame Billie Miller recommended specialising in that policy area and building “constituencies of interest” with others dedicated to the topic. Moving initiatives forward in the legislature also requires a strong understanding of its rules – both unwritten and written (e.g. Standing Orders of Parliament, Parliamentary Questions, and Private Members’ Resolutions).

➔ WORKING WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Dame Billie Miller spoke to the crucial role that NGOs can play in advancing women’s representation in politics. She stated that becoming involved with an NGO can provide an invaluable foundation for political careers. NGOs can also be productive partners for governments, she said, giving the example of the **[Barbados Social Partnership](#)**.

Day 2: Briefings and Knowledge Exchange with Regional Stakeholders

The second day of the meeting was structured as a series of briefings from regional partners. Presenters shared their current projects or initiatives to advance women's political empowerment and gender equality and engaged in robust discussions with the parliamentarians present on the subject matter and the possible opportunities for collaboration. The session was moderated by Ms. **Lebrechtta Nana Oye Hesse-Bayne** (CIWiL).

The first speaker was Dr. **Halimah DeShong**, Head & Lecturer, Institute for Gender and Development Studies – Nita Barrow Unit ([IGDS: NBU](#)), University of the West Indies. In her [presentation](#), Dr. DeShong provided an overview of the programmes of study offered – including the Caribbean Institute in Gender and Development ([CIGAD](#)) comprehensive training certificate programme – as well as background on the history of research on transformational leadership at IGDS: NBU, explaining the institution's role in influencing gender-responsive development in the region. As an example, she detailed the [LIVITY project](#), a four-year, seven-country partnership with the Barbados Council for the Disabled (BCD) and the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality (ECADE), with six core activities: a CSO incubator, groundings, leadership academy, annual policy forum, and street art festival.

Next, Ms. **Ashell Forde**, President, No! to Online Harassment and Abuse ([NOAH](#)), gave a [presentation](#) on her organisation, a charity formed by a group of ordinary Barbadians concerned about the growing prevalence of online abuse. NOAH provides resources to victims of online abuse and conducts seminars and workshops on topics such as child online protection, personal cyber security, cyber bullying, and combatting revenge porn. She highlighted **Project CARE** (Combatting Abuse through Research & Education), which has the objective of quantifying the problem of gender-based online abuse, raising public awareness, and training law enforcement officers in order to improve victims' experiences. Ms. Forde noted various ways parliamentarians could support NOAH's project and its broader aims, with a view to expanding these initiatives to the regional level.



Briefings and Knowledge Exchange with Regional Stakeholders

Ms. **Tonni Brodber**, Deputy Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean, then provided an overview of the organisation’s mandate across the English and Dutch Caribbean, recent projects and programmes, and the type of technical support that can be provided to parliaments. In her [presentation](#), she expanded on the findings of a recent study conducted with Caribbean Development Research Services (CADRES) which sought to investigate [Caribbean perceptions of political leadership](#). The study looked at levels of acceptance and the most common explanations for the importance of women’s involvement in politics, among other indicators. In her discussion of the results, Ms. Brodber highlighted how these findings could inform the adoption of strategies and legislation to increase women’s political representation.

Dr. **Tres-Ann Kremer**, Head of Good Offices for Peace & Political Adviser for the Caribbean Region at the Commonwealth Secretariat, then gave a [presentation](#) on the Commonwealth’s areas of focus for support in the Caribbean and its institutional partnerships. In particular, she focused on the outcomes of a new [study](#), “Women and Political Parties in Five Small States of the Commonwealth Caribbean,” which will shortly be expanded upon in additional countries. The study found that **campaign financing** is one of the most crucial challenges facing women wishing to run for election and outlined strategies that can be adopted to address the issue. The report includes summary recommendations under numerous other categories as well, such as negative campaigning, gender-sensitive party constitutions, and youth engagement.

Finally, Lady **Anande Trotman Joseph**, Chair, CIWiL, and **Alisha Todd**, Director General, ParlAmericas, gave a [presentation](#) on a **new joint CIWiL-ParlAmericas project**, “Promoting Women’s Political Leadership in the Caribbean.” This three-year project is part of a larger hemispheric project funded by the Government of Canada under its [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#), with activities that will contribute to strengthened capacities, support networks, and coordination amongst women leaders from different countries and generations; these activities will be coordinated out of a permanent, staffed CIWiL headquarters. As the project will actively engage parliaments and partner organisations, Ms. Todd and Lady Trotman-Joseph encouraged the meeting’s participants to support the future initiatives to unfold in their countries.

The meeting was closed with a **vote of thanks** by Alisha Todd.



Key Action Points

Over the course of the meeting, the following points of action surfaced in conversations:

1. Explore with political parties how to better **recruit and support women candidates**.
2. **Mentor** aspiring politicians and foster their interest in gender equality and respectful political dialogue.
3. Connect with local women's organisations and other **civil society** actors to create partnerships in support of each other's work.
4. Advocate for national **implementation of international gender equality commitments**, including CEDAW, the **SDGs**, and the forthcoming CARICOM Regional Gender Equality Strategy.
5. Apply a **gender lens** in examining and debating all legislative issues, recognising that all issues are women's issues

We invite parliamentarians to communicate all progress related to these and any other actions undertaken as a result of participation in ParlAmericas activities. Progress will be recorded and presented to member parliaments at future events.



PARLIAMENTS PRESENT



ANTIGUA AND
BARBUDA



BAHAMAS



BARBADOS



BELIZE



CANADA



DOMINICA



GRENADA



JAMAICA



ST. KITTS
AND NEVIS



ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

This meeting was made possible in part by the generous support of the Parliament of Barbados and the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

Canada 



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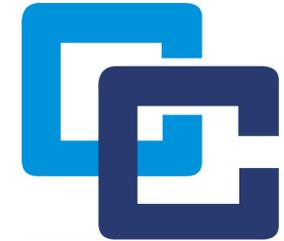


CIWIL

Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership



The Commonwealth



Subscribe to the ParlAmericas Podcast on [iTunes](#) or [Google Play](#), where you can listen to the inspirational feature address from this meeting by Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados, as well as the presentation by H.E. Dame Billie Miller, Ambassador Extraordinaire and Plenipotentiary of Barbados.

For information related to the work of the Parliamentary Network for Gender Equality (PNGE), contact the ParlAmericas Gender Equality Program: parlamericasgen@parlamericas.org.

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ParlAmericas facilitates the exchange of parliamentary **BEST PRACTICES AND** promotes **COOPERATIVE POLITICAL DIALOGUE**



ParlAmericas mainstreams **GENDER EQUALITY** by advocating for women's political empowerment and the application of a gender lens in legislative work



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