



Building a Coordinated Position For Caribbean Negotiations On Beijing+25

#ParlAmericasGEN

#Beijing25Caribbean

ParlAmericas, in collaboration with the UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean; the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS): Nita Barrow Unit, University of the West Indies (UWI) – Cave Hill; Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL); the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD); and CARICOM, and with the support of the Parliament of Barbados, organized the meeting [*Building a coordinated position for Caribbean negotiations on Beijing+25*](#).

THEME

Building a coordinated position for Caribbean negotiations on Beijing+25

LOCATION

Bridgetown, Barbados

DATE

February 10-11, 2020

PARTICIPANTS

More than 60 parliamentarians, ministers, representatives from national gender machinery, multilaterals, and civil society from 12 countries over the two days of activities



This activity aligned with SDGs 5 and 17

The meeting's two days of activities convened parliamentarians, ministers, representatives from multilaterals, national gender machinery, and civil society from English CARICOM countries for focused dialogue and coordination around the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action ahead of negotiations at the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64) scheduled for March 2020. Their dialogues contributed to the development of a unified sub regional voice and coordinated advocacy strategy.

Inauguration

Ms. **Roberta Clarke** and Dr. **Asha Kambon** co-facilitated the meeting, offering their subject matter expertise and skills in building coalitions for women's rights and gender equality. Throughout the working sessions they encouraged the participants to devise strategies that amplified Caribbean leadership and experiences while responding to the region's current preoccupations.

The meeting was officially opened with welcoming remarks from Ms. **Alison McLean**, Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean; Dr. **Letnie Rock**, Acting Head, IGDS: Nita Barrow Unit, UWI – Cave Hill; Ms. **Sophia Fernandes**, Commonwealth Programme Director, WFD; Ms. **Ann-Marie Williams**, Deputy Programme Manager – Gender and Development, CARICOM; Lady **Anande Trotman-Joseph**, Chair, CIWiL; Speaker of the House of Assembly His Honour **Arthur Holder** (Barbados), member of the ParlAmericas Board of Directors.

As we aim to develop a sub regional cohesive agenda for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it is imperative that we, as key stakeholders and decision makers, engage in a dialogue as part of the negotiation machinery.



Dr. Letnie Rock, Acting Head,
IGDS: Nita Barrow Unit, UWI – Cave
Hill

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



[The Beijing Declaration's] bold vision for transforming the lives of women and girls holds renewed relevance ... Across the globe, women's movements, energized by young feminists at the helm, are challenging slow and piecemeal progress and are impatient for systemic change in the face of these multiple crises. Their voices must be heard and acted upon.

The Beijing+25 anniversary gives us all an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come and importantly, what more we collectively need to do to truly achieve gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls.

Ms. **Sophia Fernandes**, Commonwealth Programme Director, Westminster Foundation for Democracy



We as civil society remain committed to realizing transformational gender leadership and equality in the Caribbean ... As we caucus, as far as possible, let us sing from one Caribbean hymn sheet in our one Caribbean space. May our discussion be fruitful as we receive the baton of Beijing+25 to pass it on to the next generation.



Lady **Anande Trotman-Joseph**, Chair, CIWiL

When you support women – and this goes for women, men, girls and boys – women make the lives of everyone better. When we support women all of society benefits and succeeding generations have a better chance of survival.



Ms. **Ann-Marie Williams**, Deputy Programme Manager - Gender and Development, CARICOM

I am acutely aware that there remains much work to be done to ensure that all women and girls truly have the same opportunities as boys and men. This is on all of us, men and women alike.



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

Keynote address

The keynote address was delivered by the Honourable **Cynthia Forde** (Barbados), Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs. Minister Forde passed on a warm welcome on behalf of the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Honourable Mia Mottley, who was unable to attend. In her remarks, Minister Forde shared reflections on the importance of the meeting at hand, from her vantage point of having been part of the Barbadian delegation to the 4th World Conference in 1995. She stated that the experience was one of the most profound of her life, as the Beijing Declaration was, without a doubt, the most visionary agenda for women's empowerment.

The participants had the opportunity to acknowledge and applaud the pioneering work of Dame **Billie Miller** and other women in the room who had represented the Caribbean at the 4th World Conference. In her remarks, Minister Forde shared a quote from Dame Miller's address to the Conference in her role at the time of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tourism and International Transport.

We come to Beijing as a member of the Caribbean Community which is united and will speak with one voice on the major issues before us. I wish to take this opportunity to publicly commend all who were involved in that process and whose efforts have brought us here today.

Dame **Billie Miller** (Barbados), Ambassador-at-Large and Plenipotenciary (Barbados), from the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, 1995



Its impact helped to mold and shape my consciousness and direction in life to become more entrenched into politics in order to work and work on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. As we reflect on the Caribbean nation as a whole, we witness the outstanding role our women are playing as they seek to climb the political, corporate and business ladder while working with civil society and governmental entities to build stronger and better platforms for gender equality ...

Twenty-five years later, we have been able to witness the changes in women's rights, however, it is incumbent upon all of us to continue in the vanguard of renewed efforts to be bold, inclusive and inter-generational in every sphere of life ... There have indeed been some retrograde steps taken during that period that we never contemplated. These unfolding actions of discrimination, stigma and deprivation of women and girls, have really been a terrible backlash in our hard fought battles, but we must not renege on our responsibilities.



Honourable **Cynthia Forde**, Minister of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs (Barbados)

Session 1: Introduction to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

The first working session provided a historical perspective on the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#). It contextualized Beijing's monumental significance as a turning point in women's rights agreements, as well as its continuing impact as many regional and global initiatives mark its anniversary.

Dr. **Asha Kambon**, co-facilitator of the meeting, provided foundational background on the Beijing Conference. She then transitioned the session to a panel discussion, which was moderated by Ms. **Farmala Jacobs** (Antigua and Barbuda) Directorate of Gender Affairs. Dr. **Kambon** was joined by two additional panelists who likewise contributed substantially to the development and actioning of Beijing's agreements in the Caribbean. In her remarks, Ms. **Michele Irving** (Belize) discussed how implementation continues to be monitored and the important role CSOs play in that regard. Ms. **Hazel Browne** (Trinidad and Tobago) shared some of her most powerful recollections from the experience in Beijing from the perspective of resilient grassroots activists.

Session 2: Overview of Caribbean progress: From Beijing's pillars to Generation Equality's themes



The afternoon session provided a space for knowledge-sharing and reflection on the critical areas of action -- known as pillars -- of the Beijing Declaration. Through a series of presentations, specialists from different stakeholder groups shared progress achieved on these issues in their country, and in the region more broadly. They also highlighted good practices to help close the gaps identified by [national](#) and [regional](#) review reports. The presentations allowed for connections to be drawn to the themes of Generation Equality, which was examined in greater detail the following day.

In the first part of the session, participants heard from Dr. **Barbara Bailey**, who spoke via video conference on poverty (pillar A) in the Caribbean region and its links to women's education (pillar B). Senator Dr. **Saphire Longmore** (Jamaica) then gave an informative presentation on **bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights**, corresponding to the question of women's health (pillar C). Next, Ms. **Elaine Henry-McQueen** (Grenada), Senior Programme Officer, Gender and Family Affairs, presented on the situation of **gender-based violence**, (pillar D). Lastly, Ms.

Nadeen Spence spoke about the need for **youth engagement** as a cross-cutting requirement for sustaining advances in all of these areas, and building on Beijing's action area on the girl child (pillar L).

Session 2: Overview of Caribbean progress: From Beijing's pillars to Generation Equality's themes (continued)



In the second part of the session, Ms. **UnaMay Gordon** presented on **feminist action for climate justice**, corresponding to women and the environment (pillar K). Ms. **Bridget Lewis** then spoke about **technology and innovations for gender equality**, which is of increasing relevance since the Beijing Declaration's development; she drew on examples of hackathons and other innovative projects to promote women in STEM. Senator **Aziza Lake** (Antigua and Barbuda) gave an overview of women's progress in politics, power, and decision-making (pillar G) through the lens of **feminist movements and leadership**. Finally, Dr. **Tonya Haynes** spoke about **Caribbean institutions and networks**, a cross-cutting consideration for the participants in analyzing all of the above priority themes.

The second day of the meeting featured a series of briefings to highlight opportunities to connect and build on the forums and movements that can inform the approaches that governments and other stakeholders take towards post-Beijing+25 initiatives.

Dr. **Jacinta Higgs** (The Bahamas), Director of the Department of Gender and Family Affairs gave an overview of the XIV Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was held in Santiago, Chile in January 2020. She highlighted Caribbean participation and interventions at the Regional Conference and the agreements reached in relation to its outcome statement, the [Santiago Declaration](#).

Ms. **Alison McLean**, Representative of UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean, presented on Generation Equality, a new multigenerational campaign intended to realize the promises of Beijing. She explained that, through a series of galvanizing moments around the world, [Generation Equality](#) will drive forward tangible progress as part of the UN's Decade for Action leading up to 2030, the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, the meeting participants were addressed by Ms. **Devita Abrahams**, Vice-Chair Designate of the Latin American and Caribbean States Group of the Bureau for CSW64. Ms. Abrahams joined the meeting virtually and provided valuable background and guidelines on the processes and timelines for inputs into the Political Declaration for CSW64.



Session 2: Overview of Caribbean progress: From Beijing's pillars to Generation Equality's themes (continued)

Generation Equality Action Coalition Themes

The upcoming Generation Equality forums will be organized around the following Action Coalition themes. The Coalitions are intended to catalyze collective action, drive increased investments, and deliver results for women and girls.

- Gender-based violence
- Economic justice and rights
- Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Feminist action for climate justice
- Technology and innovation for gender equality
- Feminist movements and leadership



Session 3: Introduction to negotiations

This session, led by Dr. **Rosina Wiltshire**, focused on practical guidance for engaging effectively in regional and global forums in pursuit of gender equality, whether towards Beijing+25 or other key advocacy goals. Dr. Wiltshire drew on vast experience negotiating in different spaces, including at the 4th World Conference on Women. She stressed the importance of developing personal leadership capacities — such as through emotional intelligence — and she also emphasized the importance of working as a CARICOM bloc to advance common priorities.



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Sessions 4 and 5: Establishing Caribbean Priorities in Regional and Global Negotiating Spaces, and Developing Common Ground on Issues of Concern

In the next sessions, at working tables, participants explored shared advocacy priorities in more detail and worked towards common positions on these for the region. Using as reference the [draft Political Declaration](#) (issued January 2020) being negotiated internationally ahead of CSW64, deliberations were organized around: 1) economic justice and rights, 2) gender-based violence and citizen security, 3) climate justice and feminist action, and 4) technology as if people mattered. The conclusions developed by each working group were then presented in plenary for further feedback and consensus building.

Looking ahead to CSW64, the participants agreed on the need to ensure that Caribbean countries contributed actively through the formal channels that exist to provide inputs on the Political Declaration. They stressed the importance of timely information-sharing for this purpose, and it was agreed that the CARICOM Secretariat had an important ongoing role to play in this regard.



Key action points

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

1. Increase political and technical contributions to CSW Political Statements and to other negotiated documents for gender equality, taking into account the need to centre shared Caribbean priorities.
2. Ensure that all Caribbean countries submit timely progress reports to regional and international review mechanisms on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; additionally ensure that these reports are socialised with local CSOs.
3. Facilitate the capacities of regional stakeholders to use the principles of transformational leadership to build common ground and advocate for gender equality.
4. Identify strategic opportunities to put gender equality on the agendas of multilateral decision-making bodies.



“Women Works” networking evening

On the second day of the meeting, the International Women’s Forum (IWF)-Barbados and UN Women Multi-country Office - Caribbean, in collaboration with CIWiL and ParlAmericas, generously hosted a networking reception for the participants. This was an opportunity to learn about IWF-Barbados’ initiatives to support women’s leadership in the business sector and to hear from some of the young women who have benefitted from this programming.

At the reception, CIWiL also announced its upcoming activities in the region for young women, in particular Young Women in Leadership (YWIL)-Trinidad and Tobago, which took place the following month and provided training for young women interested in pursuing political and other types of leadership.



Parliaments Present



Antigua and Barbuda



Dominica



Saint Kitts and Nevis



Bahamas



Grenada



Saint Lucia



Barbados



Guyana



Saint Vincent and the Grenadines



Belize



Jamaica



Trinidad and Tobago

Organizing Partners



This gathering was made possible with the generous support of the UK Government through the Commonwealth Partnership for Democracy and the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

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