



**CARING FOR DEVELOPMENT:  
STRENGTHENING GENDER EQUALITY AND CARE POLICIES IN THE CARIBBEAN  
JOINT STATEMENT**

We, parliamentarians, representatives of national gender machineries, and experts from 15 Caribbean countries and territories, gathered in St. George's, Grenada, on April 16-17, 2026, to explore how we can support the adoption of better practices in legislation, policy, programs, and services related to care, contributing to the strengthening of national care systems.

Care is a human right, defined as the set of actions necessary to preserve human well-being, including assistance to those who are in a situation of dependency or require support, whether on a temporary or permanent basis. This right, as outlined by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, has three components: to **provide care** to others under decent conditions; to **receive quality, adequate care** when needed; and the ability to pursue **self-care** and attend to one's own well-being.<sup>1</sup> The provision of care itself consists of a wide array of everyday activities for managing and sustaining life that take place inside and outside the home.<sup>2</sup>

Care is a universal human need and an indispensable condition for the enjoyment of a dignified life. It is essential for all individuals' physical, biological, and emotional well-being and needs, which change depending on the phase, stage, or conditions in their lifecycle, including but not limited to, whether they are a child, adolescent, adult, older person, pregnant, ill, person with disabilities, whether temporary or permanent, or belong to a population group requiring care.

We further recognize that care work constitutes a foundational pillar of social wellbeing, economic resilience, and inclusive development. Care sustains individuals, societies, families, and economies.

Across the Caribbean, persistent inequalities exist in the distribution, recognition, and valuation of care – which have a disproportionate impact on women and girls<sup>3</sup> – that shape labour market outcomes, access to opportunities, and the ability of individuals and families to fully exercise their rights. Given demographic change, evolving family structures, and fiscal pressures, there is further need to strengthen care systems and to see this as an urgent public policy challenge requiring coordinated legislative, budgetary, and institutional responses. We further recognize the critical role parliaments play in this equation – by shaping legal frameworks, mobilizing and monitoring public resources, and providing oversight over the effective implementation of care-related policies and services.

Over the course of our deliberations, we reviewed data and evidence on the current state of paid and unpaid care work, explored the differentiated social and economic impacts of gaps, and examined current national legislation and policies related to care in relation to the existing situation. While our national contexts are diverse, our discussions underscored shared challenges across the region relating to the coverage and quality of care services across the life-cycle, constraints in financing and institutional capacity, and the need to strengthen

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<sup>1</sup> [Advisory Opinion OC/31 on the content and scope of the right to care and its interrelationship with other rights](#), Inter-American Court of Human Rights

<sup>2</sup> [Inter-American Model Law on Care](#), Inter-American Commission on Women

<sup>3</sup> Statistically, women and girls make up the majority of providers of paid and unpaid direct care work due to gendered social norms that perpetuates a lifelong cycle of unequal distribution of care work from an early age.

coordination and shared responsibility among public institutions, the private sector, families, communities, and other stakeholders.

In response, we explored emerging good practices in care-responsive legislation and policy, outlined options for financing and expanding care systems within existing fiscal constraints, and reflected on the importance of gender-responsive social protection and effective implementation and service delivery to ensure that legal and policy commitments translate into tangible outcomes for people and communities. We highlighted the various ways in which strengthening care measures and systems will result in broad benefits for our societies and economies as a whole, and explored the 5R framework as a guide for our actions at the national and regional levels. We also reaffirmed the value of regional dialogue and peer exchange in identifying practical solutions, learning from different approaches, and advancing more coherent and effective parliamentary action on care.

Motivated by this understanding, we collectively commit to advancing a comprehensive, rights-based, and gender-responsive approach to care, grounded in the 5R principles of recognizing, reducing, and redistributing unpaid care work; rewarding paid care work; and safeguarding representation of care workers.

Specifically, we, as stakeholders in defining and shaping the trajectory of the Caribbean region's development, commit to the following priorities that represent areas of convergence that emerged during the meeting:

1. Assessing gaps in access to and quality of care among our populations – with specific attention to inequalities by gender, age, socioeconomic status, geography, ethnicity, and disability, among other characteristics – and calling for the collection of the disaggregated data necessary to allow for this assessment.
2. Reviewing and strengthening care and social protection legislation, policies, and programs – and providing oversight over their implementation – to respond to the population's diverse needs and improve equitable access, affordability, and quality of care services.
3. Advocating for the development of comprehensive care systems that apply intersectional, intercultural, and human rights perspectives in their creation and functioning to support care providers and ensure that care is addressed across the life-cycle.
4. Promoting sustainable financing for the care agenda by calling for evidence-informed and data-driven public investment decisions, assessing policy options and trade-offs, and strengthening parliamentary engagement in budget formulation, review, and oversight related to care.
5. Contributing to recognizing care as a human right and shared social responsibility through socialization efforts within the education system at all levels, general public information campaigns, and advocacy through our own platforms, specifically focusing on addressing harmful norms and stereotypes that have resulted in women carrying disproportionate levels of care responsibilities.
6. Adopting an inclusive and participatory approach in decision-making and work on care, fostering meaningful engagement by population, civil society organizations, academics, specialists, and youth – among other stakeholders – in design, implementation, and oversight processes.
7. Fostering continued parliamentary dialogue, cooperation, partnership, and the exchange of good practices on care, including engagement with civil society, experts, and other stakeholders, to support informed lawmaking, effective oversight, and sustained political attention to care as a public policy priority.

These outcomes will serve as a reference to support ongoing dialogue and action on care, contributing to the development of more inclusive, resilient, and gender-equal societies across the Caribbean.