STATEMENT

BY

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REPRESENTATIVE
OF BELIZE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ON BEHALF OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)

AT THE

DISCUSSION ON TECHNOLOGY FACILITATION MECHANISM, AND OTHER
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION ISSUES

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I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Caribbean Community and to associate it with statements of the Group of 77 and China and of AOSIS.

Mr. Co-facilitator,

CARICOM countries have invested in the deployment of information and communication technologies (ICT) in order to support the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals through, among other things, strengthening frameworks for the delivery of public services in order to overcome constraints caused by poverty, remoteness and gender inequality.

We have seen first hand how the expansion in the use of the ICT in key areas gives an added impetus to Governments’ efforts in fostering growth and long-term development in multiple sectors. We further note that the development and transfer of clean technologies will play a critical role in supporting global ambition to achieve the required transition to low emission and climate resilient development in order to tackle climate change. We therefore continue to work on improving initiatives in the field of fostering technology development and innovation both at the national and regional levels.

Notwithstanding these positive advancements, CARICOM Member States, as small states with vulnerable economies characterised by fiscal deficits and high debt to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) ratios, do not possess the technical or human resource capacity to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by ICT development.

For CARICOM, therefore, science, technology, innovation and capacity building are key and cross cutting enablers for the implementation of the Post 2015 development agenda in all three dimensions of sustainable development and should be accorded our full and committed consideration:

(i) in the context of the development of a technology transfer mechanism as an element of the Means of Implementation for the Post 2015 development agenda; and

(ii) in the broader sense of the promotion of science, technology and innovation in the FFD discussions as a necessary update for the global Means of Implementation policy framework.

Mr. Co-facilitator,

CARICOM has participated actively in the debates and dialogues organised under the auspices of the United Nations on this critical issue. We note with appreciation the progress that has been made with the number of proposals that have been discussed on the structure and functions of a global technology transfer mechanism. In this regard, we would wish to reiterate that:

Notwithstanding the several iterations at bilateral and multilateral levels to address technology as an important means of implementation for climate sensitive development, the experience in our region demonstrates that there are still major factors that constrain technology development and transfer. These include:
- Intellectual Property Rights regime and instruments such as Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS);
- Onerous terms for accessing technology including costs and restrictive clauses applied to the use of the technology;
- Limited local capacity to manage and effectively use the technology;
- Unwillingness on the part of the supplier to un-package the "package of technology being acquired" to allow for local manufacture and supply of some components;
- Unsuitability and non-adaptability of technology to local conditions resulting in poor performance; and
- Failure to account for the social and cultural factors in the countries where the technology is to be utilised.

In our view therefore, what is needed therefore is an enabling and supportive regime that allows access to relevant technology on better terms than those that now prevail as well as support for the development of appropriate technology that suits local and national contexts. We see a key role for a global technology mechanism to assist in the creation of this enabling global environment.

Allow me now to elaborate on some of the core functions of such a mechanism:

One such function should be to promote coordination and coherence, provide information on a centralized basis, and also assist States with ensuring that stronger linkages are made between the type of technology assistance that is provided and national development priorities.

It must also provide a platform for addressing the issue of scale and appropriateness of existing technologies to specific circumstances of States. Addressing the issue of scale and appropriateness is of particular relevance for Caribbean because it in turn impacts upon access. For example, waste disposal is a perennial problem for CARICOM Member States. Although several technologies exist for waste to energy transformation, the scale is totally unsuitable to the small countries of the Caribbean that do not generate the quantity of waste to satisfy the feedstock requirements. A centralised multilateral system for facilitating technology development and dissemination would be the most appropriate forum in which to address this problem of scale and appropriateness. There is at present no forum where issues such as these can be raised with all relevant stakeholders at the table to work on designing solutions. Not even the Technology Mechanism recently established under the UNFCCC to facilitate the implementation of enhanced action on technology development and transfer in order to support action on mitigation and adaptation to climate change has a broad enough mandate to address the full range of challenges and needs of developing countries in the field of technology.

A further function of a mechanism is to rationalise and centralise approaches to capacity building in developing countries in order to facilitate technology development. Almost every UN Agency, Fund, Programme and several Treaty Bodies have developed work programmes in the field of technology transfer, dissemination or development. In addition to these initiatives, countries also engage in a number of bilateral or cooperative projects in the field of technology transfer with a view to meeting international obligations where they exist. In developing countries with significant resource and capacity constraints, such as those in our sub-region,
monitoring and evaluation of these fragmented, usually sector or agency specific activities, is for the most part impossible. Moreover, any effective aggregate assessment of the impact of these initiatives on the overall sustainable development aspirations of our States has, in the majority of cases, never been achieved. A concerted global effort would be required to assist countries efforts at the national level in order to achieve this.

Mr. Co-facilitator,

It is for these reasons that we see the proposal for the establishment of an ‘online, global platform building on and complementing existing initiatives, and with the participation of all relevant stakeholders’ in its current form as an inadequate and unsuitable solution for addressing the needs that we have expressed. In our view, such a platform would not be able to effectively assist States with the implementation of the Post 2015 development agenda. Such an online tool would also need to be complemented by a management and coordination structure within the UN and include regional and sub-regional cooperative mechanisms and national coordination units that actively carry out the required functions. This is the type of multi-layered mechanism we must proceed to establish.

In closing, it is appropriate for this intergovernmental process to conclude our deliberations on the matter of the global transfer of technology mechanism. We consider that it also would be appropriate for the conclusions to be reflected in the development agenda proper. It is imperative that we differentiate those deliberations from matters that can be undertaken by the Secretary General as a matter of course.

Thank you.