



**STATEMENT OF
THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)**

**General Debate Segment of the 2021
High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

12 JULY 2021

CARICOM Statement for the General Debate Segment of the 2021

High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Mr. President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the fourteen (14) Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

CARICOM aligns itself with the statements delivered by the distinguished representatives of Guinea on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

We gather at this 6th High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at a critical moment. Indeed, over one year since the spread of COVID-19 reached pandemic proportions, we are still feeling the socio-economic and health impacts across our region which threaten to undo many of the gains made towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda by the end of this Decade for Action and Delivery.

The theme for this year's HLPF is therefore timely- "*Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade for action and delivery for sustainable development*".

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated our pre-existing challenges as small island and low-lying coastal states. We have seen our economies rapidly deteriorate and our debt burdens increase in the face of fighting the pandemic and trying to forge ahead with

some semblance of a recovery. We cannot forget that all of this is happening while we are a few weeks into what is expected to be an active 2021 hurricane season. In fact, just mere days ago Hurricane Elsa unleashed torrential rainfall, severe flooding, and destroyed hundreds of acres of crops and severely damaged thousands of homes in its wake. In spite of these challenges, CARICOM remains firmly committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as evidenced by the fact that two of our member states will present their Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) this year- Antigua and Barbuda will present its VNR for the first time while the Bahamas will present its VNR for the second time.

Mr. President,

Any discussion on recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will be in vain if it does not include fair and equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccines. As has been said numerous times within the past year- "***no one is safe until everyone is safe***". Accordingly, CARICOM calls on other partners and donors to urgently support funding and close the funding gap for the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator and its mechanisms, such as the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility.

Mr. President,

For CARICOM, a sustainable and resilient recovery will be impossible in the absence of long-term debt relief and debt restructuring initiatives and the provision of additional financing through appropriate facilities by developed countries. For us, we face a very real possibility of a systemic debt crisis in the 2021-2022 financial period. This would have a crippling effect on our fiscal space and capacity to effectively finance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Connectedly, CARICOM remain deeply concerned that our repeated calls for the formal establishment and implementation of a multidimensional vulnerability index which goes beyond GDP per capita to measure development continue to go unanswered. The decisions made in the short term, will have lasting impacts on our member states' ability effectively recover.

If we do not use this moment to build back better to formally adopt more holistic measures to determine access to concessionary finance and development support when will we do so? If now is not the moment, when shall that moment come?

Mr. President,

The HLPF not only provides the space for member states to follow up and review progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, but also, gives us the much needed opportunity to examine where we are and ensure that the systems and mechanisms in place at the international, regional and national levels are able to support the needs of member states. Six years after we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, our current situation provides extreme but necessary impetus for us to accelerate appropriate actions toward delivering meaningful sustainable development for all.

I thank you.