



Statement on behalf of CARICOM

By

**H.E. Mr. Dennis Francis, Ambassador, Director, Multilateral Relations Division,
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**At the
10th Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals**

on

**Gender equality and women's empowerment; Education; Employment and
decent work for all; Health and population dynamics**

**United Nations Headquarters
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Mr. Co chair,

I speak on behalf of the fourteen (14) member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). We align ourselves with the statement delivered by Bolivia on behalf of the G77 and China and Nauru on behalf of AOSIS.

Gender Equality and women's empowerment:

We agree that achieving gender equality and women's empowerment could form the basis of a stand-alone goal area and also be addressed in the form of targets throughout other goal areas. Targets under a stand alone goal should prioritise the following:

- End all forms of discrimination against women of all ages
- End violence against girls and women in all its forms
- Ensure equal participation of women in decision-making in public and private institutions
- Reducing the disproportionate burden of unpaid work

In the context of other goal areas, cross cutting issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment should focus on:

- Universal access for both women and men to modern energy services
- Ensuring equality of economic opportunities for all, including marginalised groups
- Eliminating gender based and other forms of labour market discrimination
- Ensuring access to safe and affordable drinking water and adequate sanitation for all
- Improving the provision of sexual and reproductive health care
- Achieving high completion rates at all levels for education for both boys and girls

Mr. Co Chair,

We note that for the implementation of any targets and goals on data disaggregated by sex for improving gender equality policies, including gender sensitive budgeting will be required. This is a matter of critical concern for CARICOM and many other SIDS and must be addressed in the context of means of implementation for the improvement of data and statistical systems.

Education

Education is a key enabler for the achievement of all goals geared toward the achievement of sustainable development. It is also an area of unfinished business from the MDG agenda.

As the MDGs focused on quantitative targets and indicators in the area of education, it is our view that the SDGs, with the aim of being applicable to all, should include qualitative targets and indicators. Increased enrolment alone is not an indication of quality education that would be appropriate or competitive in the job market place.

CARICOM is therefore of the view that a stand-alone goal in this area would be necessary and should focus on “Ensuring equitable access to education at all levels and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

Possible targets on this area could include:

- Achieving high completion rates at all levels for education for both boys and girls
- Providing universal early childhood education
- Promoting curriculum design to ensure that knowledge and skills that match the demands of the labour market, including through vocational training and skills development for youth
- Integrating sustainable development and awareness of climate change in education curricula
- Achieving universal adult literacy and providing lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Enhancing teacher training

Employment and decent work for all

For CARICOM we see important linkages between the employment and decent work agenda and the treatment of issues such as youth, equality, economic growth, education and culture. We are of the view that this is an area which could be addressed throughout the goal framework in different areas. The following targets could be considered:

- Promoting new industries that supply goods and services for low income consumers as well as environmentally sustainable products and services
- Increasing the use of macro economic policy instruments to promote full employment
- Increasing the implementation of school-to-work transition policies to increase employment rates of young women and men, with targeted measures for disadvantaged youth
- Decreasing the share of young women and men who are neither in employment, nor in education or training
- Expanding the provision of social security protection
- Eliminating gender based and other forms of labour market discrimination
- Promoting increasingly higher levels of productivity matched by decent wages
- Fostering entrepreneurship through promoting the development of small, micro and medium sized enterprises

Health and population dynamics

There are still disparities, in and among countries and regions, in terms of the levels of achievement of the health-related MDGs including the fact of too many preventable maternal and child deaths.

The challenges which remain as we approach 2015 concern both communicable diseases such as HIV and AIDS and malaria, neglected tropical diseases and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension, heart disease and diabetes.

Indeed NCDs have become a major cause of death in all countries. We view health as an area deserving of high priority and a specific focus.

CARICOM reiterates its position that a health goal within the SDG framework should tackle issues of access, affordability, quality and effectiveness in an equitable manner.

As a result, for us a sustainable development goal on health should aim at *achieving the highest attainable standard of mental and physical health and improving life expectancy for all* including through the following target areas:

- Attaining universal health coverage
- Elimination of preventable child and maternal deaths, “through inter alia improving quality of and access to sexual and reproductive health”
- End the HIV/AIDS epidemic
- Significantly decreasing deaths caused by communicable diseases and neglected tropical diseases
- Reducing by 25% by 2025 deaths caused by non-communicable diseases
- Providing for the health needs of persons with disabilities, youth migrants, ageing populations and rural communities

The means of implementation on this issue should address:

- Intellectual Property Rights issues for the provision of affordable drugs for treatment
- Technology transfer for the provision of modern equipment for the treatment of non-communicable diseases
- Financing for the expansion of rural community health care centres
- Capacity building to improve research into preventative approaches for the treatment of non-communicable diseases

Mr. Co Chair,

For CARICOM, issues related to population dynamics touch on a number of goal areas including employment, education and, most notably, sustainable cities and human settlements. It must therefore be treated in a cross cutting manner. It is our view that clustering this issue with health limits the consideration it can be given across the goal framework. Previously outlined targets, which address social protection, employment for all, access to health care, and the treatment of youth all highlight different aspects of population dynamics. Migration and infrastructure development are also key concerns in this area. We look forward to addressing this matter more concretely in discussions over the next few days.

I thank you.