

Statement by
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United Nations

On behalf of
the Caribbean Community
(CARICOM)



On
Agenda Item 25
Social Development
in the third committee

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Chair,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the fourteen Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on Agenda Item 25: Social Development.

At the outset, allow me to extend congratulations to you and the members of the Bureau on your election to preside over the work of the Committee. We wish you every success during your tenure and assure you of our full cooperation.

We also thank the Secretary-General for the reports pertaining to this agenda item which will assist in enriching the discussions during this session. CARICOM aligns itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Chair,

Since 1995, at the World Summit for Social Development, we collectively committed to empowering our people, in order to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities and recognized the importance of people-centered inclusive development. Nearly 25 years later, inequalities persist. However, CARICOM remains committed to improving the well-being of our people and enabling them to attain their highest potential. We therefore welcome the theme of this 74th Session of our Assembly, which places emphasis on galvanizing our efforts for poverty eradication, quality education, climate action and inclusion.

Chair,

Our region is highly susceptible to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. We have been victims of the ravages of natural disasters which continue to thwart our development. This reality places an added challenge in delivering on our international commitments and leading to a widening of the inequality gap, placing those who are in vulnerable situations in an even more precarious position. Nevertheless, the resilience of our people and our will to leave no one behind has propelled us to continue to address the risks and challenges of climate change.

Addressing inequality, in all its dimensions, is essential to eradicating poverty, advancing social progress and achieving sustainable development for all. Long term investments in social policy promote sustainable development and economic growth. While some progress has been achieved for instance within the education and health sectors, more still needs to be done.

Chair,

Better health is central to happiness and prosperity. CARICOM remains fully committed to the continued improvement of our health sector and the provision of access to the quality health care that our people require. It is in this spirit that we welcome the convening of the recently concluded High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage and the adoption of its political declaration. This historic occasion was an opportunity for us as a global community to discuss and take stock of our efforts to build a healthier world, while simultaneously addressing our health-related targets and goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Chair,

We welcome the improved access to early childhood, secondary and adult education worldwide, as well as the rapid expansion in school enrollment, as highlighted in the Secretary General's report. Advancing human capital development has been a central pillar of our region's social development framework and the CARICOM Strategic Plan 2015-2019. We therefore continue to provide increased access to quality education and lifelong learning, so that our people may acquire the necessary skills and competencies to prepare them for the demands of today's society and the transformational change in the world of work. Accordingly, CARICOM is working assiduously towards the implementation of its *Human Resource Development (HRD) 2030 Strategy*. This strategy focuses on the key priorities of access, equity, quality and relevance.

Chair,

Social development must take on board the contributions of youth. We continue to provide opportunities to engage our young people, to let their voices be heard and let their talents unfold. We acknowledge the active engagement of our youth in climate change discussions and applaud their engagements. Further, we welcome the opportunities presented to them to participate in the discussions within the United Nations, for instance at the recently held UN Youth Climate Summit. In this light, we recall General Assembly resolution 72/146 on Policies and Programmes Involving Youth.

The effects of climate change are real and multifaceted. We concur with the Secretary General's report that the impact of climate change on the world of work presents both challenges and opportunities for youth. Youth unemployment continues to be a challenge within our region. It has contributed

to a widening poverty gap, increasing levels of disenchantment, crime and insecurity.

Innovation, change and the will to succeed are essential to reducing poverty and inequality. We will therefore continue to make efforts to ensure decent work and opportunities for entrepreneurship for our youth, for example, through unlocking the potential of the green economy.

CARICOM is committed to ensuring that youth issues are addressed in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as related frameworks including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the SAMOA Pathway.

Chair,

In order to ensure that we leave no one behind, we are cognizant of the need to adapt social protection policies that cater to the specific needs of all our people including children, youth, women, persons with disabilities, our ageing population and people who are in vulnerable situations. CARICOM remains committed to the provision of effective social protection systems that will elevate their potential.

The fight to reduce inequality and poverty requires an integrated, cross cutting and collaborative approach. International cooperation, partnerships and investments for mutual benefit, are vital enablers for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We will continue to constructively engage with local, regional and international development partners in the quest for social development and the eradication of poverty in all its forms.

Chair.

We welcome and applaud the work of the Commission on Social Development. We look forward to further discussions and engagements with the Commission, as we strive to unlock the greatest potential of our people. Our goal is to ensure that they become the arbiters of their destinies, as we march on with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

CARICOM remains committed to working diligently with the rest of the international community to truly ensure the growth, development and prosperity of all our people.

I thank you.